THE
Poor Doubting CHRISTIAN
Drawn to
CHRIST.

Wherein the main Lets and Hinderances, which keep Men from coming to Christ, are discovered.

With special Helps to recover God's Favour.

By *THOMAS HOOKER.*

Isa 55. 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, drink of the Waters of Life; and he that hath no Mony, come, buy, and eat freely.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

Poor doubting Chriſtian drawn unto CHRIST.

JOHN 6. 45.

Every Man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

THere are divers Lets and Impediments which hinder poor Chriſtians from coming unto Chriſt; all wich I deſire to reduce to theſe following Heads.

Firſt; Such Hinderances as really keep Men from coming to take hold

of Christ at all, which are briefly these.

Lets which hinder Men from coming to Christ.

1. Blind Carelesness, or Presumptuous Security, whereby Men content themselves with their present Condition, presuming all is well with them, when there is no such matter.

2. Being convinced of this, they bethink how to save themselves by their own Strength, and thereupon set upon a Reformation of Life, thinking to make God amends by reforming some Sins which they hear themselves reproved of by the Ministers.

3. The Sinner being convinced of his utter inability to please God in himself, at length gets up a stair higher, and sees all his Performances, and Prayers, and Duties to be of no power in themselves, but that he must leave all, and cleave only unto Christ by Faith; and this he thinks he can do well enough, and so thrusts himself upon Christ, thinking all the work is then done, and no more to be looked after.

4. If

4. If he sees this fails him too, then he goes yet further, and confesseth he cannot come to Christ, except Christ give him his Hand, and help him up; therefore now he will attend upon the Ordinances, and labour and bestir himself hard in the use of all good means, conceiving thereby to hammer out at last a Faith of his own to make him happy. And here he rests, hanging as it were upon the outside of the Ark so long, till at last the waves and winds growing fierce and violent, he is beaten off, and so sinks for ever.

Besides these, there are other kinds of Hinderances which do not indeed deprive a Man of Title and Interest to eternal Happiness, but make the way tedious and uncomfortable, so that he cannot come to Christ so readily as he desires and longs to do; the ground whereof is this: When Men, out of carnal Reason, contrive another way to come unto Christ than ever he ordained or revealed; when we *set up our Standards by God's Standard*, or *our Threshold by his*,

Ezek. 43.8. and out of our own Imagination, make another ſtate of believing than ever Chriſt required or ordained. No marvel that we come ſhort of him: For thus we put Rubs, and make Bars in our way: we manacle our Hands, and fetter our Feet, and then ſay, that we cannot take, nor go: Thus it is with you poor Chriſtians, and the Fault is your own. But, amongſt many, there be three Hinderances which are chiefly to be obſerved, by which many gracious Hearts are marvelouſly hindered from coming to, and from receiving that Comfort from Chriſt which they might, and he is willing to impart unto them.

Three main hinderances which keep Men from Chriſt.

Firſt; The diſtreſſed Soul, being (haply) truly humbled, takes notice of the Beauty of Holineſs, and the Image of God ſtampt upon the Hearts of his Children, and of all thoſe precious Promiſes which God hath made to all that are his; now the Soul ſeeing theſe, begins thus to reaſon with it ſelf, and ſaith, Surely if I were ſo holy and ſo gracious, then

then I might have hope to receive the pardon of my Sins: or were my Heart so enlarged to Duties, and could my Heart be so carried with Power against my Corruptions, to master them, then there were some hope: But when I have no Power against Sin, nor any Heart to seek so importunately for a Christ, how dare I think that any Mercy belons to me, having so many wants? Thus they dare not come to the Promise; and they will not venture upon it, because they have not that enlargement to Duties, and that Power against Corruption which sometimes the Saints of God have.

But we must know, this doth not hinder; and that we make that a Hinderance, which, in truth, is none. For (observe it) we must not think to bring our Enlargements and hope to the Promise, but go to the Promise for them: Hope must be stirred, and Desire quickned, and Love and Joy kindled by the Promise. But who made this Condition of the *Covenant*, That a Man must have so

much of Enlargement, before he can come to the Promise? Our Saviour being our Husband, requires no Portion with us, nor ever look'd after any: All that he looks for is meer Poverty and Emptiness. If thou hast nothing, yet he will have thee with thy nothing; provided that thou wilt have him. Therefore it is thus written; *The Rich he sends empty away*; but the poor he satisfies, and the thirsty he refreshes with good; and so, as that there is nothing required on our side but to receive him as a Husband: For, *Buy without Money* is the Text. You must not come and think to buy a Husband: the Lord looks for no Power or Sufficiency from you, of your selves; nor of your selves any power against Corruption, or enlargement to Duties: If you will be content that Christ shall take all from you, and dispose of you and all; then, take a Saviour, and then you have him.

Object. But the poor Soul saith, *If I go thus hoodwink'd, how shall I know that I do not presume, and how shall I know*

know that I have a true Title to the Promise?

I answer: There is no better Argument in the World to prove that thou hast an Interest in Christ, than this, which is thy taking of the Lord Christ as a Saviour wholly, and as an Husband only, *John* 1. 12. *As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* He doth not say, To as many as had such Enlargement to Duties, and such Power against Corruption; but if thou wilt take Christ upon those terms on which he offers himself, there is no better Argument under Heaven than that, to prove that thou hast a Title to the Promise. Indeed there is a desperate Despair that often seizeth upon the Hearts of distressed Sinners. *Answ.*

Therefore in the second place, as the Sinner looks upon the Excellency of Christ, and of Grace, and upon his own Insufficiency withal, which makes him that he will not venture upon the Promise; so he looks too altogether upon his own Sinfulness 2.

and Worthlesness, and therefore dare not venture upon it; he views the number of his Sins so many and vile, and the countenance of them so long, and durable; and he seeth the Floods of Abominations coming in so amain upon his Soul, and Satan to boot, (who helps him forward in all this,) therefore he dares not make out unto Christ. But this is the Policy of the Devil, who (if he can) will make a Man to see Sin thorow his own Spectacles, or not to see it at all; and then to say, There is Mercy enough in a Saviour, and therefore I may live as I list. But when the Sinner will needs see his Sin, then he will let him see nothing but Sin; and this, to the end that he may despair for ever.

Now here the poor Sinner it at a stand, and can go no further; for tell him of the Mercy of God, and of the plenteous Redemption in Christ, and of the Riches of the freeness of God's Grace: What (saith he) should I think that there is any Mercy for me, and that I have any Interest in Christ? that

that were ſtrange. And thus the Soul is always poring, and always too much faſtned and ſettled upon his Corruptions, ever ſtirring the Sore, without ever going to the Phyſician. Where note, that a Man is as well kept from looking to Chriſt by Deſpair, as by Preſumption. Before he ſees his Sin, he thinks his Condition is good, and that he hath a ſufficiency of his own, and needs not go to Chriſt; and when he ſees his Sin, then he beholds ſo much Vileneſs in himſelf, and in it, that he dares not go to Chriſt, leſt when he comes before him, he ſends him down to that ever-burning Lake of Fire and Brimſtone. Herein the Devil is very ſubtile; but this doth not hinder our Title to Chriſt; neither ought it to diſcourage us from laying hold on Salvation.

For firſt, (obſerve it,) For whom did Chriſt come into the World, and for whom did he dye when he was come? Was it for the *Righteous?* ſuch needed him not: It was for the *poor Sinner* that judgeth himſelf, that con-

condemns himself, and that he cannot save himself. *Paul* saith *Christ*
2 Tim. 1. 15. *Jesus come into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am the chief:* and Zech. 13. 1. *There is a Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness*; that is, for all sorts of Sins, and kind of Sinners; be their Iniquities never so great, and never so vile, there is a Fountain set open for them; come who will. There was never any saved that was not a Rebel first; nor any received to Mercy, that first opposed not the Mercies of God, and his Grace in Christ. The fiery Serpents did sting the People in the Wilderness, first then they were stung, and, being stung, there was a brazen Serpent to heal them. But,

Observe the Folly of this Plea; what Scripture ever said, that the greatness of Man's Sin could hinder the greatness of God's Mercy? No Scripture saith so; we see *David* prayeth to the contrary, *Have Mer-*
Psal. 25. 11. *cy upon me, O Lord, and pardon my Sins for they are great:* Nay, God himself doth the quite contrary, *Isa.* 43.

43. 24, 25. *Thou haſt made me ſerve with thy Sins, and wearied me with thine Iniquities, yet I am he that blotteth out thy Tranſgreſſions for my Names ſake.* When the Jews did tire God with their diſtempered Manners; and burthened him with their ſinful Courſes, then the Lord for his own Names ſake would not ſo much as remember their Iniquities againſt them.

Again obſerve, That Sins, though they be never ſo heinous of themſelves, yet if the Soul can ſee them, and the Heart be burdened with them, they are ſo far from hindering the work of Faith, and from making thee uncapable of Mercy, that they fit thee the rather to go to Chriſt. The truth is (which I pray you take notice of,) it is not properly our Unworthineſs, but our Pride and Haughtineſs that hinders us from coming to Chriſt; for we would have ſomething from our ſelves, and not all from him. But to the diſtreſſed Soul, that ſees the Vileneſs of his Sins; I ſay, ſuppoſe thy Sins were fewer,

fewer; yet upon such a Suppose, thou wouldst not go to Christ, as perswaded of the Freeness of his Grace; but because thy Sins are not many, and upon conceit that thou hast a Worthiness in thy self, and wouldst bring something to Christ, and not receive all from him; therefore thou keepest back, And is it not plain (then) that it is thy Pride, and thy Self-conceitedness that hinders thee? Thou must have thus much Grace and Holiness; and Christ must not justify the ungodly, but the godly Man. But I tell thee, that, upon such terms, he will never justify thee, or any Man while the World stands.

Object. But the Soul replies again; *My Sins are worse than so, not only because they are many, but because of the Mercy and Salvation that I have rejected, and which hath been offered me from day to day.*

Answ. But I answer: This cannot hurt thee, provided that thou canst see those Evils of thine: For then, though thou hast cast away the Kind-

Kindneſs of the Lord, yet the Lord will not caſt thee away, if thou wilt come and ſeek him earneſtly again and again; *For the Iniquity of his Covetouſneſs I was wrath* (ſaith God) *and I ſmote him; I hid my ſelf, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own Heart.* If this could have hindred, *Judah* ſhould never have received Mercy: but the Text ſaith, I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him; *Thou haſt play'd the Harlot with many Lovers, yet turn again to me, ſaith the Lord.* So then, there is no time paſt, if a Man have but a Heart to return. There is no Limitation of the Riches of God's free Grace, except the Sin againſt the holy Ghoſt; therefore ſaith Chriſt, *Rev.* 3. 20. *I ſtand at the Door and knock:* Though he cry till he be hoarſe, and ſtand till he be weary, yet he ſtand ſtills: if any adulterous or deceitful Wretch open, the Lord will come in, and bring ſtore of Comfort to him, and ſup with him.

Isa. 57. 17, 18.

Jer. 3. 1.

Oh, all that is true, ſaith the poor Soul, had I but a Heart to mourn for my *Object.*

my Baseness. See my Sins I do, but this is my misery; I cannot be burdened with them; I have a Heart that cannot break and mourn for dishonouring of God, and offending him so many ways. But I say,

Answ. This hurts not neither; provided that thy Heart be weary of it self, because it cannot be weary of Sin. *The Lord sheweth Mercy, because he will shew Mercy:* It is not because thou canst please him, but because Mercy pleaseth him. When did the Lord shew Mercy to *Paul?* I say, when? but even when *Paul* did express most Malice against him? *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* He persecutes Christ, and yet Christ pities him, and shews him Mercy: and so the churlish *Jaylor*, when he was most opposite against the means of Grace, the Lord even then shewed most Compassion upon him. He that (before) resisted the means of Grace, was now brought home by those means that before he resisted.

Mich. 7. 18.

Acts 16.

Object. But wo to me (saith the poor Soul) you are now come to the

quick:

quick: this very Word is like a Milſtone about my Neck, and I in the Sea, ready to be ſunk for ever. This is the depth of that Baſneſs that lies on me, even this, That all the means can do no better upon me. Why? what though *Paul* and the Jaylor were bad enough, ſo bad as you ſay? Yet they were made better by the Means: but this is my hopeleſs Condition, That the Means of Grace prevails nothing on me. Oh, is there ſuch a Heart in Hell as I have? for how bad muſt it needs be, when all the means in the World can do it no more good! And now, methinks I feel my Heart more hard and inexorable under all God's Ordinances, than when at firſt I believed. My Condition therefore is (moſt certainly) hopeleſs, ſeeing the means that ſhould ſoften me, do but harden me, and make me worſe.

Anſw. This is the laſt Plea whereby the Devil keeps in, and poſſeſſeth the Heart of a poor heartleſs Sinner. But let me anſwer thee, and for anſwer I ſay: This hurts not neither: for here

here at least thou maist have hope of Mercy? And here observe these three things by way of Answer; and know that.

1. First; The Word and Means of Grace do work good, if they make thee more sensible of thy Hardness and Deadness, though haply they work not that good, and after that manner that thou desirest; yet if they make thee to see thy Baseness, thy Hardness of Heart, and Dulness of Spirit, in regard of that body of Death which hangs upon thee, then the Word and they work in the best manner; because it is after God's manner, howsoever not after thine. That Physick works most kindly, that makes the party sick before it works; so it is with the Word: before, thou hadst a proud Heart, and didst therefore lift up thy self in thine own Abilities, and didst trust in thine own Strength, and thou thoughtst that thy Care, and the Improvement of the Means, would work Wonders: But now the Word works sweetly, when it makes thee ap-

apprehenſive, that a wounded Soul is the Gift of God, not of Man, nor of the Means; when it makes thee look up to God for it, and to prize it when thou haſt it; and to wait upon God with thy daily Prayers, ſtill to continue it ſo. To feel Deadneſs, is Life; and to feel Hardneſs is ſoftneſs only remember this one Caution, Except there be ſome Luſt or Diſtemper that thy Heart hankers after, (for then the Word will harden thee, becauſe thou hardneſt thy ſelf) that one I ſay excepted, thou art in a good way.

Secondly; (mark this, I beſeech you) Thou art the cauſe why thy Heart is not ſoftned, and why the Word works not upon thy Soul: the Diſtemper of thine own Heart, hinders the working of the Word, and Diſpenſation of God's Providence, and the Tenour of the Covenant of Grace. Thou thinkeſt to limit the holy One of *Iſrael*; but that may not be: for, his Covenant is a Covenant of Grace; and the Lord (who is free) will not ſtand bent to thy Bow, or 2.

give

Wait for Mercy.

give thee Grace when thou wilt; for, *it is not for us to know the Times and Seasons.* What if the Lord will not give thee Grace this Year, nor the next, nor all thy Life? if at the last gasp he will drop in a little of his Favour, it is more than he ows thee. Therefore hear to day, and wait to morrow, and continue in so doing, because thou knowest not when God may bless his own Ordinances. Complain not of Delays, but wait, for God hath waited for you long; and therefore if he make you wait for Peace of Conscience, and Assurance of his Love, he deals but equally with you, and as shall be best with you. God gives what, and when, and how he will, therefore wait for it.

3. Rest not upon Duties.

Thirdly; Know and consider, that thou hast rested upon thine own Duties and Endeavours, and so doest not go to God, that blesseth both the Means, and all the Endeavours of his this way. The fault therefore is thine own, (I say) thine own, because thou restest in thine own Performances, and in the Power of the means

means that thou apprehendeſt, and doeſt not go to God, that would have wrought more than all they can: for, did a Man depend upon God's Power and Mercy in his Ordinances, he ſhould always find ſome proportionable Succour, as well when he finds no Succeſs, as when he finds any. God ſometimes gives, and ſometimes delays to give: but God's Love is as conſtant when he gives not, as when he gives. Therefore labour to quit all carnal Confidence in holy Duties. Reſt not in thine own Performances, but look beyond all Duties, to God, and deſire him to give thee the Succeſs above them.

Watch how thy Soul behaves it ſelf after the naked diſcharge of a Duty: all quiet and calm, notwithſtanding he lives in a daily courſe and practice of Sin; ſo that he prays and lyes, faſts and cozens, and yet this makes all whole: I tell you, it is an undoubted Argument, that the Soul did place a carnal Confidence in his own Performances, and as yet never

never attained to a Lord Christ in the Duty: For he that seeks a Saviour in his Duties, and rests not in self-performances, this Man brings a Saviour, a Christ into his Soul. And mark what follows; Christ brings pardoning Vertue, and purging Vertue with him, and gives him more power against Corruptions, and more Suspicion over his own Soul than ever he had before: so that the Soul begins to quarrel with it self, and lies down with Shame, and says, What shall I think of my praying and hearing? where is the virtue and power of it? Did ever Christ hear my Prayers, or come into my Soul by his Ordinances? Where is the purging Vertue then, to clear me of my Sins? where is the purifying Virtue to cleanse me of my Corruptions? This is a ground of a gracious Heart, that placeth not any Confidence in holy Duties, but only in the Lord Christ.

Do not content your selves in this, that you see a need of a Saviour, because your Minds are enlightned therein, and your Reason perswaded thereof;

thereof; when in the mean time you place a kind of Confidence in the Duty performed and Service discharged, and think thereby to bring Christ at your beck, and you in the mean while do what you please: this is a wonderful cunning craft of Satan. This I say then, A Man may see a need of a Saviour; but do not quiet thy Soul, because thou knowest it must be so, and because thou findest by Experience thou canst not help thy self, the Guilt of Sin still sticks upon thee, and therefore a Saviour now must help thee: I say, content not thy self with the meer notion of it, to say, I see it should be so, and it must be so, and rest thy self contented in the performances of Services, and think to bring a Saviour at thy beck, to do what thou wilt for thy Soul; this is a slight that Satan has pinn'd to thy Soul. Many think to have a Soveraign Authority over Christ, when they have performed Duties: so that he does not use the means to be led to Christ, but he takes up his Duties to be Commanders

of

of Christ, and that he may dispose of Christ for his own turn; so that he makes Christ an Abetter of his own Wickedness, not a Subduer of his Corruptions. This is a marvellous Deceit, when Men rest in their own Abilities, and so abuse Christ. And this will appear in these particulars.

First; Watch how thy Heart is in the performance of Duty. Doth thy Prayer, and Hearing, and performing of Services, make thee venturous and fool-hardy to meddle with Corruptions? then it's a certain ground thou placest carnal Confidence in thine own Performances. As for Example: If a Professor should say, What if I do now and then sin? and what if I do now and then pilfer, and use false Weights and Measures? I'll but pray so much the more, and fast so much the oftner: will not my Conscience then be satisfied? It shall be satisfied; I will command it: I will put in Bail for my Sin, and pray against it. Now I beseech you observe it; this praying and perform-

ing

ing of Duties, is meerly to command a Saviour to give allowance to Sin, that so he may commit it freely. As who would say, I have Authority over my Saviour, and he shall pardon my Sin, and give me allowance to commit Sin. O the wretched Villany that is in this Man's Heart! Fearful is thy Estate, whosoever thou art, that makest thy Performances an Abettor of thy Distempers: so that thou doest thy Duties not to convey Christ, that he may help thee to prevent Sin, but that Christ may take off the Venome and Indignation of Sin, that so thou may'st commit Wickedness without either Suspicion or further Distraction.

Many a Man makes his Services his Saviours. For, he makes them the bottom to bear up his Conscience; the ground whereof is this. Haply he finds and feels by woful Experience, what the Fruits of Sin are. He sees the Venom of his Corruptions, and the lamentable Effects of all his sinful Practices. He thought it before a fine thing to swear, and

lye, and drink, and follow base Com-
pany; but now they are Gravel to his
Heart, and Gall to his Soul. His Con-
science flieth in his Face, and he is
ready to sink down to Hell under the
burden of his misorder'd Life. Con-
science saith, These be thy Sins, and
these will be thy Damnation: They
have been thy Delight, but they will
prove thy Shame and Confusion in
the end; and shortly thou shalt find
the smart of them: To Hell there-
fore, be packing, and gone.

Now this Man hath no other cure
for his Conscience in such a case, but
this; he intreats Conscience to be
quiet. He confesseth he hath lived
in base Courses, and his Condition to
be very miserable; but now he will
reform all. He hath neglected Praye
heretofore, but now he will pray: he
hath hated God's Servants, but now
he will love them; his ways have
been exceeding evil, but now he will
reform them, and now he will turn
over a new leaf. This he saith, and
this (he thinks) will serve his turn.
And thus many poor Souls use the

mean

means as *Mediators*, and ſo fall ſhort of Chriſt. But a gracious Heart doth not only *pray*, and *hear*, and *receive*, and uſe all poſſible means to obtain Chriſt, but is reſtleſs and unſatisfied till he enjoy and poſſeſs Chriſt in the means. He reſts not upon the bare performance of any Duty, neither thinks by virtue of any ſuch his endeavours to get into Chriſt.

I will expreſs this Particular more fully in this manner. A rich Uſurer that is ſick of ſome Diſeaſe; tell him ſuch a Phyſician can cure him, but he ſtands upon ſtate, and will not come without a great deal of Charge. Charge (ſaith he) I do not ſtand upon that; I have Money enough by me, enough to fetch him hither. Such a Man now placeth all his Confidence in his Money. So when the Soul ſees the Gilt of Sin is not removed, and that *Conſcience* is ſtill ſnarling, and that (the Law condemning him) Chriſt is the only Saviour, and he only that can ſatisfie and cure all. But now, How ſhall Chriſt be procured? Why? His

Prayer, and *Fasting*, and *Performances*, may command so much, and that by the power and merit of the Work done. The Voice of a Pharisee, and proper Language of a Papist. But what Promise is there for it? Within-book none. But thus Fools rest on their own Performances, and so fall short of Christ and Salvation.

Object. *But oh* (saith a poor Sinner) *fain would I go out of my self. I see too well now, that I have rested, and do rest upon Duties done; but I cannot deny my self as I would.*

Answ. I answer, it is Satan's Subtilty to keep us in our selves, by endeavouring thus to make us go out of our selves: For by our own Strengths he would have us to do it; and perswades us we may. But this is a marvellous deepness of his, wherein he shews both Malice and Cunning in the Superlative. For here he makes us believe (and we, out of Ignorance are perswaded as he would have us) that we have the Staff in our own Hands, that is, the power to get out of our selves. But is it so? Oh

Oh no, it is a ſupernatural Work to be ſo quit of our ſelves. The ſame hand muſt bring us out of our ſelves, that muſt bring us to Chriſt: and this is *Self-denial:* and *Self-denial* is, when the Soul knoweth it hath nothing, and therefore is ſo overpowered with the mighty Hand of God, and the Work of his Spirit, that it doth not ſo much as expect any Power or Ability from it ſelf, or from the Creature, in the doing of any good: For it knows it is dead, and therefore cannot help it ſelf, much leſs can the Creature do it any good. It therefore looks up to Heaven, and ſeeks all Sufficiency from God alone. For (obſerve it) whiles I thus think that I have Ability to go out of my ſelf; do I not then ſay, that I have a Principle within me to deny my ſelf? But it is not ſo; rather it is quite contrary: for to deny a Man's ſelf, is to know that he hath no power in himſelf to do any ſpiritual Duty: therefore we muſt look only to the Voice that calleth us, the Voice of Chriſt, and know that he that

Self-denial, what it is.

calls us from the ways of Darkneſs, and out of our ſelves, muſt and will bring us out. Therefore expect only Power from Chriſt to pluck thee out of thy ſelf, and to make thee a Believer; for the ſame Hand muſt do both, or it will never be.

I would not have a poor Creature think thus with himſelf: If this Means, and theſe Ordinances will do me no good, nor work upon my Heart, I ſhall never have Comfort: but ſpeak thus unto God, and ſay, In truth, Lord, I expect no Power from my ſelf, nor from the means; but my Reſolution is, to look up to him that hath hid his Face yet from his poor Servant. I will not look any lower, as here within my ſelf, for any ſuch Power: No, Lord, but to the higheſt in Power and Gifts. Nor will I look to the Miniſter, or to the Means, but I will wait upon thee (O Lord) and look up to thy Power, to work by thine own means. Re-
Iſa. 50 10. member what *Iſaiah* ſaith: *Who is amongſt you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the Voice of his Servants, that walk-*

walketh in Darkneſs, and hath no Light of Comfort, let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf upon his God. Then when all other things in the World fail, let the Soul look up to the Lord, and get away from it ſelf. For then is the fitteſt time of all to meet with God. I would have a Chriſtian chuſe this time above all times, the fitteſt wherein to meet his Saviour, and to diſappoint Satan: for, as I ſaid, it is the laſt Refuge that the Devil hath: and if he miſs of this, his force is gone for ever. For otherwiſe the Sinner, partly ſeeing the Beauty of Grace, will not; and partly ſeeing the Baſeneſs of his own Heart, will not dare to come to Chriſt.

But the next Complaint, in the next place, is want of Senſe and Feeling, ſuch as a Chriſtian muſt have, and finds not. Therefore the diſtreſſed Soul ſaith, *Alas, I never knew what it was to have the aſſurance of God's Love; I never received any evidence of God's Favour; and can I (then) think that I have Faith? they* *Object.*

that believe, have their Hearts filled with Joy unspeakable and glorious; the Word saith as much. But I am a stranger to this Joy; how then can I think that I have any work of Faith wrought in me?

Answ. I answer; This doth not hinder, either that thou hast not Faith, or that thou may'st not come to God by believing. Only remember these three Particulars.

1. First; Thou must not think to have this Joy and refreshing before thou goest to the Promise; thou must look for it when thou hast chewed and fed upon it: or wouldest thou have the Lord give thee the whole Bargain at once, and before the Match be made? This *Joy* is a Fruit that proceeds from *Faith* after much wrestling; and doth not presently flow from Faith, not so soon as ever a Christian begins to believe, but after a time, and then the Heart is joyous; but never filled with Joy before believing. Afterwards, and when a Man hath had the sweet Dew of the Promises dropping upon him; but many

many a day after, let him look for this Joy.

Secondly; Know that these joys, and this sense and feeling may be absent from Faith. For a Man may have a good Faith, and yet want the relish and sweetness which he longs after. One may want what he desires, and yet want neither Life nor Heat. A Tree may want Leaves and Fruit, and yet want neither Sap nor Moisture: and a Man's Faith may be somewhat strong, when his feeling is nothing at all. *David* was justified and sanctified, and yet wanted this Joy. And *Job* trusted upon God when he had but little feeling; as when he saith, *Thou makest me a But to shoot at; yet I will trust in thee though thou kill me.* Therefore build not your Comfort upon sense and feeling, which is to build upon the Sand; but go to the Promise, as to the Rock, for it.

Quest. *But how comes this Desire after Christ?*

I answer: There is no more but two Affections in the Soul, God infinitely wise having so framed it; and

these two are Hope and Desire. The Understanding says, such a thing is profitable and comfortable if I had it; then Hope is sent out to wait for that Goodness, and if it comes not: then Desire is sent out to meet that Goodness: Hope stands and waits for it: but Desire wanders up and down seeking and enquiring after a Lord Jesus, and goes from Coast to Coast, from East to West; O that I could, O that I might, and when shall I? And how may I come to the Speech of a Lord Christ? As it was with the Spouse in *Canticles*, when her Beloved was gone, she wandred up and down seeking him, and enquiring of the Watchmen if they did not see him whom her Soul loved; so wanders from this thing to that, from this place to that place, and never ceaseth to see if she can gain notice of Christ. It goes to Prayer, to see if that will entreat a Christ; it goes to the Word, to see if that will reveal a Christ: it goes to Conference, to see if he can hear of Christ there: then it comes to the Congregation, and to the

the Sacrament, to see if it can hear of any News of a Lord Christ, and of Mercy.

The Soul thus continues wandring and seeking, till at last the Lord Christ comes into the Soul, when the Soul hath thus hungred and longed for him. At length the Lord Christ is pleased to shew himself in view: *Behold, the King cometh:* so the Lord says, *Behold the Lamb of God that takes away thy Sins.* O thou poor broken-hearted Sinner, here is thy Saviour; he is come down from Heaven to speak Peace to thy Soul in the pardon of thy Sins. Thou that hungrest for a Christ, here he is to satisfie thee: Thou that thirsteth after Christ, here he is to refresh thee. Thou that hast long sought him, he saith, Here I am, and all my Merits are thine.

Now when the Lord Jesus is pleased to present himself to the Soul, now Desire hath met with the Lord.

It is in this case with a Sinner, as it is with a Traytor who is pursued, and takes a strong Hold, and is there besieged: And now he seeth no hope

hope of Favour, nor no hope of escape, therefore he is content to submit, and lay his Head on the Block, that he may receive Punishment for his Offence: now coming to Execution, he hears an inkling from the Messenger there is yet hope he may be pardoned. The poor Traytor in the Prison with that is stirred up to hope. Nay, then he hears by another Messenger from the King himself, if he will come to the Court, and seek unto his Majesty, and importune his Grace for Mercy and Favour, it's like he shall be pardoned. Then he makes haste, and Desire carries him to the Court to sue for Favour from the King. So that now he will be listening and enquiring of every one there, Did you hear the King speak nothing of me? How stands the King's Mind towards me? Pray how goes my case? Then some tell him, the truth is, the King hears you are humbled, and that you are sorry for what you have done: at last the King looks out of the Window, and sees the Malefactor, and says, Is this the Tray-

Traytor? One ſays, Yes, if it pleaſe your Highneſs, this is the Man, that is humbled and pleads for Mercy, and deſires nothing ſo much as Favour. Hereupon, the King being full of Mercy, tells him, The truth is, his Pardon is a drawing, and coming towards him. With that his Heart leaps in his Belly, and his Heart is enlarged towards his Majeſty, and he ſays, God bleſs your Majeſty; never was there ſuch a favourable Prince to ſo poor a Traytor. His Heart leaps for Joy, becauſe his Pardon is coming towards him. Haply it is not ſealed yet: Now when it is ſealed, and all done, the King calls him in, and delivers it.

So it is with a poor Sinner, he is the Malefactor. You that have committed High-Treaſon, you think not of it: but take heed, God will purſue you one day. Haply God lets you alone for the preſent, but he will ſurpriſe you on a ſudden, and Conſcience will pluck thee by the Throat, and carry thee down to Hell. And now the Lord purſues him with a heavy

heavy Stroke and Indignation, and let flye at his Face, and sets Conscience at work as a Pursevant, and that says, These are thy Sins, and to Hell thou must go: God hath sent me to execute thy Soul. Now the poor Soul sees he can no way escape from the Lord, and to purchase any Favour he sees it impossible; therefore he is resolved to lie down at God's Feet, and hope. Now Hope is a faculty of the Soul to look out for Mercy: as a Man that is in expectation of the coming of his Friend, goeth to the top of a Hill, looks round about him, to see if he can understand any thing of his Friend: so the Soul hopes and waits, and stretches it self out for Mercy. When will it be, Lord? when will this Pardon come? The Soul gets up, and stands as it were a tiptoe: O when will it come, Lord?

How does God stir up the Heart to hope? It's worth the while to consider how this is maintained.

First, The Lord sweetly stays the Heart, and perswades it that his Sins are pardonable, and that the good he wants

Wants may be ſupplied; this is a great ſupport to the Soul. Hope is always of a Good to come. Now when a poor Sinner ſees his Sins, the number of them, the nature of them, the vileneſs of them, the curſedneſs of his Soul, that he can take no reſt; he ſees no Reſt in the Creature, nor in himſelf. Though he pray all day, yet he cannot get the Pardon of one Sin. The Soul is out of any Expectation of Pardon, or Power of Mercy in any thing he hath or doth: Though all Means, all Helps, though all Men and Angels ſhould joyn together, yet they cannot pardon one Sin of his. Now the Lord lifts up his Voice, and ſays from Heaven, thy Sins are pardonable. O the Infiniteneſs of God's Power! though the Guilt of Sin is powerful to condemn the Soul. But when the infinite Power of the Lord is conſidered, as able to over-power all his Sins, this lifteth up the Heart in ſome Expectation that the Lord will ſhew Mercy to a Man; though it is a hard thing to hope, when the Soul is thus troubled, (Can this Heart be

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broken? can theſe Sins be pardoned? can this Soul be ſaved?) Now comes in the Power of God. God can pardon them. Never meaſure the Power of God by that ſhallow Conceit of thine. All things are poſſible to God, though not to Men. And as it is ſaid of *Abraham*, *He hoped above Hope*; he looked to the Lord that was able to do what he had promiſed: he conſidered not that he had a dead Body, but that he had a living God to hope on. Juſtice cannot be ſo ſevere to revenge thee, as Mercy is gracious to do good unto thee. If thy Sins be never ſo many, God's Juſtice never ſo great; yet Mercy is above all thy Sins, above all thy Rebellions. This may ſupport thy Soul.

So there you have the firſt ground to ſtir up Hope; thy Sins are pardonable. There is more Power in God to ſhew Mercy to thee, than Power in Sin to deſtroy thee. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt came to ſeek and to *ſave that which was loſt*; it was the ſcope of his coming. Now ſaith the broken and humble Sinner, I am

loſt.

loſt. Did Chriſt come to ſave Sinners? then Chriſt muſt fail of his end, or I of my Comfort. God ſays, *Come to me all that are weary and heavy laden.* I am weary: unleſs the Lord intended good to me, why did he invite me, and bid me come? Surely he means to ſhew Mercy to me.

O take heed of Deſpair. Queſtion thy Eſtate thou mayeſt, thou muſt; but to caſt away all hope is very hainous in the Eyes of the Lord. Caſt away all carnal Confidence thou muſt, and yet thou muſt hope. *Let* Iſrael *hope in the Lord, for in the Lord,* &c. The Lord takes this very ill at our Hands. Thou goeſt to the deep dungeon of thy Corruption, and there thou ſayeſt theſe Sins can never be pardoned: I am ſtill proud, and more ſtubborn: This diſtreſs God ſeeth not, God ſuccoureth not, his Hand cannot reach, his Mercy cannot ſave. Now mark what the Prophet ſaith to ſuch a perplexed Soul; *Iſa.* 40. 27. *Why ſayeſt thou, thy way is hid from the Lord?* The Lord ſaith, Why ſayeſt thou ſo? *The young Man*

ſhall

ſhall faint and be weary; but they that wait on the Lord ſhall renew their Strength. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? you wrong God exceedingly: you think it's matter of Humility, to count your ſelf ſo vile. Can God pardon ſuch a Wretches Sin as mine? Mark that place of the *Pſalmiſt*; they ſpake againſt the Lord, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs?* They ſpake not againſt themſelves, but againſt the Lord. So we ſpeak againſt God, and charge God himſelf. It is true, ſays the Soul, *Manaſſeh* was pardoned, *Paul* was converted, God's Saints have been received to Mercy: But can my Sin be pardoned? can my Soul be quickned? No, no, my Sins are greater than can be pardoned, ſaith the deſpairing Soul. Conſider how injurious this is to God, to make the power of Sin greater to condemn thee, than the power of God to ſave thee: to make the power of Satan ſtronger to ruinate thee, than the power of God to relieve thee, and ſuccour thee. And what can you ſay more? and what

what can you do more againſt the Lord? Is not this to make God an underling to Satan, and to Sin? This is juſt to ſay, The Almightineſs of God is weaker than the weakneſs of Sin; the Sufficiency of God is weaker than the Malice of Satan. It is ſo; poor humble Sinners many times will make bitter Complaints this way; and they think they ſpeak againſt themſelves. No, no, they ſpeak againſt the Lord. They ſpake againſt the Lord, when they ſaid, *Can the Lord prepare a Table in the Wilderneſs?* So you ſpeak in this deſperate manner: Why truth, Lord, this proud Heart will never be humbled, if any thing would have wrought, it would have been done ere this day. How many Sermons, how many Mercies, how any Judgments, how many Prayers? and yet this proud Heart, this ſtubborn Heart will not be reformed. You think you ſpeak againſt your ſelves now: no, no, you ſpeak againſt the Lord. And know, this is one of the greateſt Sins thou committeſt, to ſay thy

Sins

Sins cannot be forgiven.

Secondly; As this Sin is injurious to God, so it's dangerous to thy own Soul: It is that which takes up the Bridg, and cuts off all Passages, and there can no spiritual Comfort nor Consolation come into the Soul of a poor Sinner, *Luke* 3. 15. *Every Ditch must be filled, and then all Flesh shall see the Salvation of the Lord.* What are these Ditches? Why nothing else but those deep Gulfs and Ditches of Despair: and unless these be filled, no Man can see the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, this Despair of the Soul, is that which cuts the Sinews of Man's Comfort, and takes off the power and edge of all the means of Grace; it daunts all a Man's Endeavours; nay, it plucks up Endeavours by the very roots: for that which a Man despairs of, he will never labour after. It's here, as with a Man in the pangs of Death: unto such a Man, as all things are unavailable for his good: his Bed will not ease him, Meat will not refresh him, chafing will not revive him; at last

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we ſay he is gone, he is a dead Man; Friends leave him, Phyſicians leave him: They may go and pray for him, and mourn for him, but they cannot recover him. So this deſpair of Soul makes a Man caſt off all Hope, and lie down in a forlorn Condition, expecting no Good to come. Alas, ſaith the poor Soul, what skilleth for a Man to pray? what profiteth it a Man to read? what Benefit in all the means of Grace? The truth of it is, the Stone is rolled upon me, and my Condemnation is ſealed for ever, and therefore I will never look after Chriſt, Grace and Salvation any more. Let him come to hear the Word, and mark how he caſts off the benefit of it. It was marvellous, ſeaſonable and profitable, it was the good Word of God unto ſuch as have ſhare therein: why then may not you expect benefit therefrom? No, ſaith the Soul, the time of Grace is paſt, the day is gone. If Miniſters would pray for him, and good People pray for him, he bids them ſave their Labour; for Hell is his Portion,

and

and his Condemnation is ſealed in Heaven. See now and conſider what deſperate danger Deſpair brings to a poor Heart, and carries him beyond the reach of Mercy. That's a ſweet paſſage of *Davids*, Pſalm 77. 7. *Will the Lord caſt me off for ever? I ſaid this is my Infirmity*, ſaith the Text. The word in the Original, *This is my Sickneſs*, as who ſhall ſay, This would be my Death: What, is Mercy gone for ever? then my Life is gone, then is all my Comfort gone, my Hope gone: Therefore take heed of this, it takes off the edge of all our Endeavours and God's Ordinances that might do us good.

Secondly, This marvellouſly condemns that great Sin of Preſumption; a Sin more frequent, and if it be poſſible, more dangerous. The Preſumption of carnal Hypocrites that bolſter themſelves up with marvellous boldneſs in their courſe. It is as true here, and I beſeech you obſerve it, as they ſaid, *Saul hath ſlain his thouſands, and* David *his ten thouſands*: Diſpair hath ſlain his thouſands, but Pre-

Presumption his ten thousands. That Men may swear, and lye, and cozen, and break all Commands, and yet hope to be saved. They hope Grace will save them, and yet resist Grace. They hope Jesus Christ will save them, and yet oppose Christ. This is that which hath slain many thousands among us: and they are few that have not split upon this Rock. And therefore I say, this serves to reprove the baseness of such Hypocrites that boast themselves, and compare their hopes with the hopes of the Saints. It is true, say they, I cannot walk so freely, I cannot repeat a Sermon, I have not those Parts that they have; yet I hope to be saved as well as they. This is that which hath slain so many thousands of Souls that are now roaring in Hell; and they may thank Presumption for it.

Now this Hope is not the Hope of the Saints. The Hope of the Saints is a grounded Hope; but these Hopes hang upon some idle Pleas and foolish Pretences, and some carnal Reasons: But I tell you they will fail,

fail, and sink into the bottomless Pit ere they are aware. It is the Command and Counsel of *Peter*, That *every Man should be ready to give an account of his Faith and Hope that is in him.* Look to the Reasons that carry you, and to the Arguments that perswade you; see they be not groundless and foolish Hopes. You hope to be saved, and you hope to go to Heaven, and you hope to see the Face of God with Comfort. Look about, I say; good Hope hath good Reasons, grounded Hope grounded Reasons.

Thirdly; The Saints of God many times are deprived of Comfort: not because God with-holds it, but because they put it from themselves, and will not have it though he offer it: as *David*, *My Soul refused Comfort:* he was as a sullen Child that will not eat his Milk, because he canhot have it in the golden Dish. So sometimes, and because God doth not for us what we would, we will have nothing at all. These are the main Hinderances, and I might add many more: for carnal Reason is very

Psal. 77.

very fruitful this way, and we through our own Folly, and the Devil's Craft, are apt to abuse things, and to make them Hinderances in our way to Happiness eternal. I come now to the Cures of all these Impediments, where, if we had the Wisdom and Care we should have, we might break through them all to Christ. The Means (especially) are four, whereby we may be inwardly strengthened against them all, and be at last able to overcome, and put them to foil for ever.

Helps to come to Christ.

The first Cure and Help is this; We must not look too long, nor pore too much, or unwarrantably upon our own Corruptions within, so far as to be be feared or disheartned by them from coming to the Riches of God's Grace. For this is a sure and everlasting Truth, that whatsoever sight of Sin unfits a Man for Mercy, when he may take it, and it is offered, that sight of Sin is ever sinful, tho it have never so fair an outside of Sorrow and deep Humiliation. Namely, as when we think, and say, (as often

we do) Had a Soul so thorowly humbled, and bruised, and softened, and so forth, I could do well enough. And thus the Devil keeps us in Sin, by poring too long and much upon our Sins; as thinking thereby to get from them. But such a course is a sinful course. Tell not me of Sorrow, and Repentance, and Humiliation; all that Sorrow, and Humiliation, and Repentance, is naught, that keeps a Man from receiving Mercy when there is need, and it is offered. See this in *Abraham*: he had this Promise, that he should have a Son in his old Age: And *He being not weak in Faith, regarded not his old Age or Deadness, nor the Barrenness of* Sarah's *Womb, but believed in him who had promised it.* There he rests, and there he stays; he saw his Body was dead, yet there was a living Promise: and what though *Sarah*'s Womb was barren, yet the Promise was fruitful. He knew his own Deadness and her Barrenness; but he stood not long there. As *Abraham* therefore, so we may see our Sins, and consider our man

The godly Sorrow what it is.

Rom. 4. 19.

many Weaknesses, but must not so settle upon them, or consider of them as to be hindered by them from coming to God for Mercy, which he freely offers us, and we stand in need of: for, while the Soul of a Man is daily plodding upon his own Misery and distempered Life, these two things follow.

First; Stop the stream of God's Promise, and let down the Sluce against it, so that the Promise cannot enter into us. 1.

And secondly; We set open the stream and floodgate of Corruption, and make it to run most violently down, and to flood in upon us; and in the end to over-whem us. Now the Inconvenience arising hereby, is enough to slay the best Christian in the World; for what can a Man get out of his Corruption? he can have no more thereof than is to be had; and it is in vain to look for Comfort where it is not to be had: all this and the least of all this, may dishearten us, but will never encourage us, or put Heart into us. See the Humility 2.

and Wisdom of the Woman of *Canaan*; she follows Christ; but he listens not to her, but gives her a sore Foil, and calls her *Dog*; and saith, you Gentiles are *Dogs*; and the Gospel of Grace and Salvation is the *Childrens Bread*. Now if she had only considered the Words of Christ, and only looked into her self and her own Baseness, she had never come to have received either Mercy or Comfort from him. But she saith, Truth Lord, I am a *Dog*, yet the *Dogs eat of the Crumbs that fall from their Masters Table*. This was her sure Resolution: wherein there are two things which express and set forth the frame of a gracious Heart, a Heart that is truly wise to attend to its own Baseness with Faith: and that is her *Humility* and *Wisdom*: as if she had said, Thou sayest I am a *Gentile*, and a *Dog*; I confess it: there's her Humility. Yet though I am a Dog, I will not go out of doors, but lie under the Table for Mercy: there's her Wisdom. And thus she; and so we must, and should

Mat. 15. 17.

should when our Corruptions (as I said) flood in upon us, and we see our selves quite lost, and damned in our Sins, we must then say, In truth Lord, I am as bad as thy Word can make me, yet let me not flye from Mercy, but lie at the Feet of my Saviour's Mercy, till he look upon me as once upon *Peter*, *Luke*, 22. 61.

It is fit, and we ought to see our Sins: but stay we must not too long there: see them we must, but not fasten on them, so as to shackle us from coming to Christ. I have said it, and will say it, That that sight of Sin which doth not drive a Man to Christ for Mercy, is ever sinful. Labour therefore to see thy Sins, and that thus;

How to see Sin aright.

First; See thy Sins in the Royal Law, as in the right Glass; a Glass that will present them such as they be; and look not off till thou hast seen them so.

Secondly; So see them, as that by such a holy gaze at them, thou may'st see an utter Insufficiency in thy self to satisfy for them.

Thirdly; And so see them, that thou may'st by that sight behold an absolute necessity of Christ to succour thee, and then away speedily to him that can only help thee, and dwell no longer on thy Sins, but go to the Throne of Grace, where is plentiful Redemption, whence issue out Pardons in abundance to remove that Guilt that Sin hath brought upon thy Soul; and where is Power enough to enable thee to be more than Conqueror over thy Corruption. Briefly, every Soul should say thus; It is true, Lord, my Sins are many and great, for I have departed from thee the Fountain of Bliss: But shall I go on, and so further from thee, and persist in evil? God forbid. All this while I speak to broken-hearted Christians. You prophane ones, you have your Portion already, and shall have more of it in Hell hereafter; therefore for a while stand you by, and let the Children come to their Bread.

Isa. 66. 2. opened. *The Lord looks to him that is of an humble and contrite Heart, and that trem-*

trembleth before him. A poor Creature cannot but obſerve every Word of God, and tremble at every Truth, whoſe Meditation is ſuch as this: Here is Salvation indeed, but it is not mine; here is Mercy, but I have no part in ſo great Mercy; and thus he ſhakes at every apprehenſion of every Word of God, concluding certainly that he ſhall never enjoy any part of it. But mark what the Text ſaith, *The Lord looks at ſuch a trembling Soul*; that is, he caſts ſweet Intimations of his Goodneſs and love in to him, and ſaith, Thou poor trembling Sinner, to thee be it ſpoken, I have an Eye toward thee in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore he further ſaith,

Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, ſpeak comfortably to Jeruſalem, *and cry unto her, that her Warfare is accompliſhed, and her Iniquity is pardoned: tell* Jeruſalem *ſhe is accepted, tell her what my mind is.* Iſa. 40. 2.

And here he goes on, and ſaith to his Miniſter, ſpeak to the Heart of ſuch an humbled Penitential, and tell him from *Me*, nay tell him from Hea-

ven, and tell him from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from under the hand of the Spirit, that his Person is accepted, and his Sins are all of them done away, and he himself shined upon in great Mercy.

Here *Ephraim* is the picture of a Soul truly humbled, in whose Behaviour we may see the Behaviour of a true Penitent toward God, and God's dealing towards him. The Text saith, *Surely I have heard* Ephraim *bemoning himself* (there's the Heart broken and thirsty) *thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; turn thou to me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my Thigh, I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my Youth.* Thus the Sinner, as if he should have said, I am the Wretch that have seen all the means of Grace in abundant measure, and yet never profited under the hand of any. The Lord hath corrected me, but I would not be tamed; and he instructed me, but I would

Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20.

would not learn. Lord turn me, Thou art my God; I have nothing in my ſelf; Nay, now I ſee the Evils which before I never perceived; And I obſerve the Baſeneſs of my Courſe, which before I conſidered not. Now I am aſhamed of my abuſe of Grace ſo plainly revealed: I am even now confounded with the ſenſe of thoſe Abominations my Soul did formerly take pleaſure in. This may be conceived to be the mourning of a poor much broken Sinner. And now mark God's anſwer: *Ephraim is my Son, he is a pleaſant Child: for ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill, therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will ſurely have Mercy upon him.* As much as to ſay; I obſerved all thoſe ſecret Sighs, I conſidered all thoſe Tears, I heard all thoſe Prayers, and take notice of all thoſe Complaints, and my Bowels even yearn towards this poor dejected Sinner, an humble Soul that ſeeks to me for Mercy. The truth is; I will embrace him with my loving Kindneſs. This for the

first means of Help.

2 *Help.* Now, The second means of Cure is this, Take heed of judging thy Estate by carnal Reason without the Rule, which is commonly the fashion and fault of poor distressed Spirits, who pass fearful Sentence against themselves upon groundless Arguments, and say, I never found it, I feel no such thing, and I fear it is not so. But in this we hear but carnal Pleas, coming out of Satan's Forge, and by his help, from our selves, against our selves, for we judg our selves by them. But, I say, Take heed of this Wile of Satan's, and make conscience of this as much as of any other fault, as much as of Swearing, Stealing, Whoring, or Murder; for this is as truly Sin as those, though not so great; yet a far greater Sin than you imagine. Consider this thou humble-hearted Christian, for to thee I speak. Therefore when upon these grounds thou concludest that thy case and estate is naught; see and consider against how many Commandments thou offendest.

The Danger of judging our selves rashly.

eſt. Firſt, Thou diſhonoureth God, and the work of his Grace, by denying that which God hath done for thee: alſo, and ſpeakeſt *unreverently* againſt him; beſides, thou art a Murderer, for that thou woundeſt thine own Soul. Further, thou robbeſt thy ſelf of much Comfort, and ſo art a *Thief*; *and thou beareſt falſe Witneſs* againſt thy ſelf, yea, againſt Chriſt, and the Spirit of Chriſt, and the work of Grace already wrought in thee. Alſo, thou joyneſt with the Devil againſt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Are theſe no Sins?

But thou wilt ſay, I ſpeak as I think. Yet that hinders not, but that thou beareſt falſe witneſs. As, we ſee, if a Man affirm ſuch a one is a Drunkard, and knows it not, this Man bears falſe witneſs, becauſe though the Man be indeed a Drunkard, yet is it more than he knows. So thou ſay'ſt that thou haſt nothing, when thou doſt but only fear it, and ſuſpect it, and doſt not feel it. I ſpeak this the rather, becauſe of the ſinful Diſtemper that creeps,

creeps in upon the Hearts of many broken-hearted Christians; and so as that out of a self-will'd road of carnal Reason, and a vile haunt that they have gotten, their Hearts are perswaded that they do well to do so, and that they can never be well except they do so.

But they that are such (mark what I say) when Reason is plain against them, and plain Scripture evidenceth the contrary, do not so much attend what the Minister saith, as they stand and invent how they may answer the Minister; and (so) put away their own Mercy. Therefore let the Fear of God fall upon every poor Soul that heareth this; and let him know, that howsoever he hath taken or given leave to himself, or taken up the Wasters, by taking up Pleas against the Truth; yet now he is to change the course, to go aside, and to mourn apart for his Misprision: also to wonder that the Lord hath not all this while taken away all the Comforts of his Grace, and all the Motions of his Spirit from him.

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The Prophet *David* prays the Lord to *turn away his Eyes from beholding Vanity.* Now if God muſt do that; that is, turn away our Eyes that they ſee not; much more muſt he turn away our Hearts that they attend not on lying Vanities. We muſt attend God and the Voice of his Spirit; but to liſten to carnal Pleas (which we have no warraut to do) is to ſin deeply, and to hurt our own Soul both deeply and dangerouſly. No Man would deal with a Cheater. Carnal Reaſon is a Cheater, therefore we ſhould not heed it, unleſs we would reſolve to be cozened. And now if the danger of the Sin cannot make us to do this; let the Sorrow that will come of it, conſtrain us. The Prophet ſaith, *Behold, all you that kindle a Fire, and that compaſs your ſelves about with the Sparkles that ye have kindled; this ſhall you have at my hand, ye ſhall lie down in Sorrow.* Theſe are the Prophet's Words, nay, God's by him. And now I will tell you what is meant by *Sparkles*, and what by *Fire.* In the old

Pſal. 119. 37.

Iſa. 50. 11.

old Law (as some of you know) there was heavenly Fire kept continually upon the Altar of the Sanctuary, (which shadowed out the Will and Wisdom of God in his Word,) and there was also strange Fire, that is, divers Sparkles of Men's own Imaginations and Conceits. Concerning this, every poor Creature carries his Tinder-box about him, and is ever kindling of it. But such a Fire much provoked God once, and so doth still. So saith the Text; in which are two things. First, That the Heart of Man will naturally invent carnal Reasons and Pleas against it self, and be settled upon them as upon the dregs of a Vessel that is at a bottom. Secondly, That the issue that followeth is fearful: For it is said, *This shall ye have of mine Hand, ye shall lye down in* your own *Sorrow.* Now then, when the Scriptures are clear, and Reasons upon it evident, yet you will have your own Devices and Ways; Thus much I must tell you, *You shall lie dow in Sorrow* at last, and you may thank your selves

for

for it. Away then with your Tinder-boxes, abaſe your ſelves before the Throne of Grace, and be at laſt wiſe to Salvation ſo nigh.

Ho, every one that thirſteth (ſaith God by his Prophet) *come and buy without Money, take of the Well of the Water of Life, and live for ever freely.* Many a poor Miniſter, while he preaches the good Word of God, would fain leave his Commodity behind him, while he ſaith, You muſt have it; and you ſhall have it; it is your Portion, and belongs of right unto you. Thus we are fain even to force God's Favour upon you. Hereupon we beſeech you to believe, and we entreat you for the Lord Jeſus ſake to receive Mercy, and to humble your Hearts.

Thus we deal with you in Fatherly Terms. But will you take ſo great and ſo good a Commodity from us?

No, Beloved; many ſweet Promiſes, and many admirable precious things of Grace and Salvation are revealed, but Men are negligent to take

for

for themselves: in this case our Markets stand upon our selves; we pass not to lay out any thing here to benefit: some carnal Plea or other marrs all. This argues plainly the small Estimation that we have of Christ. But the poor hungry Sinner, one that is apprehensive of his own Weakness and Feebleness, longs till the *Feast-day* cometh, that he may partake of these and such Delicates. Oh how carefully doth he listen, and how diligently doth he attend what the Minister saith? And if the Word come home to his Conscience, enlightning his Heart, and reproving him of his ways: then he cries out; Oh, I am in great Trouble; good Lord comfort me: I am full of Doubts; good Lord resolve me: I am ignorant in spiritual things; good Lord teach me: I have a proud, stout, stubborn Heart; good Lord humble me. He was never better than now. Therefore take this for a general Rule; That a good Heart is never better at ease than when the Word works most, and most bitingly.

ly. Contrarily, a wicked greaceleſs Perſon is never better than when the Word works leaſt, or never a whit upon him. But when he thinks the Miniſter will come cloſe to his Sore and Soul, he will not be at home that day, he will be ſure to be out of the Town, or not in place. He knows the Word would awaken him, and affright him, and he cannot bear the blow, therefore he keeps away, and ſhuns the hearing of the Word, when it ſhould work to his Reformation any way.

And now for a third Help, let us be marvellouſly wary and watchful that we enter not into the liſts of, and diſpute with Satan, upon points which are beyond the reach of Man, as thus to ſay; I am not elected, therefore God will not look upon me to do me any good. Or, it is a vain thing for me to uſe the means of Mercy, my time of Mercy being out. Oh the days of Grace that I have ſeen, when the Lord knocked ſweetly at my Heart, and was pleaſed to reveal my Sins unto me at ſuch a time, 3 *Help.*

time: but then (hard-hearted Wretch that I was) I shut the Door upon him, and now he is gone and past, and now there is no hope for the visit of Grace, or that Christ should return again to shew me any Mercy. If the Devil can have thee here, all thy Comfort is gone; for upon this ground a Man shall never receive rest to his Soul, come what days will. And how can he? for if he cannot judg of, or know Comfort, how shall I the Minister be able to give, or he (the Hearer) to take it?

And here look as it is with a poor travelling Man, one that falleth among Thieves, who come and promise to carry him a nearer way, but bring him into a Wood whither no Passengers come, and there they do what they will unto him: so it is with a poor Soul, when the Devil gets him into these unwarranted Disputes, as it were, large Wildernesses of God's eternal Counsel, where are no Passengers, and therefore he cannot but be void of Helps and Succour, and so as that Satan may now exercise

cise his full Pleasure, and whole Malice, by terrifying his poor desolate Soul. To avoid which straits, observe these three Rules.

First; Let the Soul in this case bear upon the Almightiness of the Power of God, who said to *Abraham*, *I am God All-sufficient.* For if thou be perswaded of the All-sufficiency of God, that assurance cannot but stay thee (slipping) from falling. And here remember that God can do more than thou canst think. He is able, and doth thee good, though thou know it not. And further, consider that the Soul cannot doubt of God's Will, but with that very doubt makes some question of his Power. This for the first Rule. 1. Gen. 17. 1.

For the second. And secondly, it bids check to thine own Heart for medling with God's Secrets, and for prying so into his Closet of hidden Counsels. For no Man should go beyond his Bounds; and it appertains not to thee to look into this Ark of matters sealed up. *Secret things belong to God, but revealed things* 2. Deut. 29. 29.

things belong to us. And *who hath known the Mind of God?* saith *Paul.* Mark this, you that will be climbing up the Ladder of God's eternal Predestination, and going up into the Skies to know what God's secret Mind is. Keep you Stations wisely; for neither the Devil, nor all the Devils in Hell, ever knew the Mind of the Lord. When *Jonah* cryed against *Nineveh*, saying, Within fourty days all you; that is, all you Drunkards, and Adulterers, and Murderers, and others, shall be destroyed: Mark here how the King resolves; his Words are, *Who can tell if the Lord will repent, and stay his fierce Wrath that we perish not?* Therefore when the Devil tells thee thus much, and saith, God hath appointed a way to Salvation, and you have had the means, and did not profit by them, therefore God will never shew you Mercy, nor give you Grace. Thus the Devil. But how can he tell that? Surely all the Devils in Hell cannot tell it: say with thy self, Let me walk in that course which God hath appointed

1 Cor. 1. 2, 16.

Jonah 4. 19.

pointed and commanded, and do that which I ought; then I may say, and with Comfort say it; Who knows but God may break the Heart of a proud, rebellious, contrarying Sinner, such as mine is, and such as I am? None verily but God knows whether or no. The third and last Rule follows.

Thirdly, therefore, measure not the Riches of God's Love, and the Sweetness of his saving Grace according to your own Conceits; nor do you think that because you cannot conceive it, therefore God will not do it, for *Isaiah* saith, *Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts*; that is, All you wicked ones and you that have lived lewdly, return from your wicked Ways, and vain Thoughts; and he will abundantly shew Mercy. 3. Isa. 51. 7, 8, 9.

But will the Lord pardon all my Sins, saith the doubting Soul? *I cannot think it: If I my self were a God, I should never pass by such intolerable things as have been done by me.* *Object.*

But I answer: Because you cannot, you *Answ.*

you think God cannot or will not: Yes, saith the Lord, I can abundantly pardon: for my Thoughts are nor your Thoughts, nor my Ways as your Ways. A poor Creature thinks his Sins are unpardonable, and that he shall never get assurance of God's favour or hope of his Love. But you are *Men* saith the Lord, and have finite Thoughts; but I am a *God*, and in Mercies infinite, when you think I will have no Mercy.

Object. But were ever any such received to Mercy as I, saith the drooping Soul? and therefore why should I be the only Man?

Answ. To this I say: when Christ had wrought many strange Miracles, the People said there were never any such things done in *Israel*. And therefore it is plain not to be doubted, that God can do things that never like were done: *He doth great things past finding out, and wonderous without number*, saith *Job:* and therefore judg not either God's Power or Love by thy scantling. Job 9. 10.

The best Christians are most suspi-

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cious of themselves, and none fuller of Doubts and Fears, than those that have least cause to fear or doubt that their Estates are broken and bad. Therefore Satan makes it his chief work to grieve and terrify such. Besides, their own distrustful Hearts are always ready to joyn issue with his false Reports against them, raising false Surmises against themselves, and putting Mercy from them; as if they were hired by the Devil to take his part in pleading against their own sure Salvation. Therefore it is worth the time to hear what *David* saith, *Psal.* 42. *The Lord shall command his loving kindness in the Morning.* It is a Phrase taken from *Princes* and great Men, whose Words are a Law of Command. For so God will send forth, as by a Commandment, his loving Kindness to a truly humble Christian. As if it should be said: Go, *Love* and *everlasting Mercy*, take thy Commission; and I charge thee go to that poor broken-hearted Sinner, go to that poor, hungry and thirsty Soul: go and prosper and prevail and stamp

Psal. 42. 8.

stamp my Love upon his Heart, and there let it stand whether he will or no. Thus the Lord charges his loving Kindness to do good to poor Sinners, and by his own Almightiness bears up the Soul, when it is ready to sink under the weighty Burden of its many Trangressions.

Object. But what? shall I have Mercy? No, no, (saith the doubting Heart) Will the Lord Jesus accept me? No surely. Could I pray so, and so, and had I these and these Parts, and could I perform Duties after this and this manner, then there were some hope; but all is contrary, and therefore wo and alas, there is no Mercy for me.

Answ. But to answer this also, Let me tell thee, whoever thou art, that God invites thee in particular, as by name, and that all the Sweetness in Christ, and in his precious Promises appertain to thy poor Soul, and thou hast as great an Interest in them as any Servant of God in the World whatsoever.

No, no, saith the trembling Soul,

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I cannot believe that ſuch a Wretch as I, ſhall, or can go to Heaven. It cannot be. Heaven ſhall rather fall, than I come there. Thus the diſcouraged Sinner knocks for Mercy, and ſhuts the Door againſt himſelf.

And now, when all carnal Reaſonings, and high-ſoaring Imaginations (as *Paul* calls them) have raiſed up ſtrong holds againſt Mercy and Comfort; when the Word cannot for the preſent ſettle Peace in the unquiet Soul; God is made at laſt to command his loving Kindneſs, and ſend it with a Commiſſion from Heaven; and to ſay unto it, I charge you break open the Doors of ſuch a reluctant Sinner, rend off that veil of Ignorance that is before his Eyes; ſilence all his Doubts and Fears: And when this is done, I charge you go home to that broken Soul, and to chear and refreſh it with the ſenſe of my ſweet Favour; and with the aſſurance of my Love to fill it.

While we were Enemies, ſaith the Apoſtle, *Chriſt died for us*. And here the Lord ſends from Heaven to a poor Rom. 5. 8.

miserable Creature, and saith, Commend my Love, commend my Mercy to such a distressed Soul, and tell it, Though it hath been an Enemy to me, yet I am a Friend to it. Tell it, Though it hath been a Traytor to me, I have been a good King to it. And tell it, that though it hath been a Rebel to me, I have yet been a loving God to it. Tell the Man (whose Heart that is) that his Sins are pardoned, his Person accepted, and that his Soul shall be saved. Tell him his Sighs and Groans are not lost, and that his Prayers are heard in Heaven. Let him know that the Lord Jesus dyed for Sinners when they were Sinners. Make all this good to his Soul, I charge you before you come back. So much for the third Help.

4 *Help.* The fourth Cure is this. And it is especially to be observed by a Christian above all, in his proceedings with himself in Bar of Judgment; and that is: Pass no hasty Sentence against thy self, but according to the Evidence of the Word. If thou art to be approved, let the Word of God do

do it; and let the ſame Word examine thee, if thou comeſt to be examined. If this Word ſpeak for thee, no matter, though all Men and Angels ſpeak againſt thee, and if it condemn thee, no matter who ſpeaks for thee: By it, thou riſeſt or falleſt to thine own Maſter. What though ſome wrangling Fellow ſtep in, and will be determining Cauſes before the Judg comes: ſhall his Word ſtand? No: therefore a wiſe Man will ſtay till the Judg himſelf do come, and wait upon the Judgment of his Mouth. Deal thou no otherwiſe with thine own Soul: put not the caſe to be tried by a company of peeviſh carnal Reaſons, but ſtay till the Word (which is the Judg) come; and judg thy ſelf by that, and hold to that for thy Life, and the Life of thy Soul. *The Light is that which manifeſteth all things*, ſaith the Apoſtle. His meaning is: The Light of the Word, and the Evidence of God's Truth, manifeſted to the Souls of God's People; Theſe properly are the Judges: The other are but

Eph. 4. 13.

wrangling Cases, not to be admitted. And here sense and feeling, grounded upon carnal matter, are like Foggs and Mists, which make a Man in case that he cannot see his way, but upon clearing up his State and Condition is open before him; and then it is manifest what it is, *Learn of me* (saith our Saviour) *and you shall find rest to your Souls:* And the Psalmist saith; *I will enquire what the Lord will say.* So say thou, I will not hearken what carnal Reason will say; I will hear what God saith. The want of this, is the cause why we have so many Distractions and disquiets, and why we are still in our doubtings; even becaufe he that teacheth, and can perswade with us, is a deluder.

Mat. 11. 29.

And hereof it is, that the poor Soul saith: What, shall I have an Interest in Christ? shall I have a Title to the Promises? Nay, this belongs to those that are broken-hearted. Indeed if I had such power against Corruption, such heavenly-mindedness, and this and that precious Grace, there were

were ſome hope; but I am ſo full of Weakneſs, and many times led captive by ſuch a rebellious Heart, that it is too apparent I never had ſaving Grace: nay, I fear I never ſhall have it truly wrought in my Soul.

This you ſay, poor Soul: But who told you ſo? and where learned you that Religion? I am ſure you never learn'd it of Chriſt. For who or what word tells you, if I have ſuch a load of Corruptions, I ſhall never have Grace? not the Word of Chriſt, I am ſure: wherefore I charge you hold to the truth of the Word: Learn of *me*, ſaith *Chriſt*, and put not your Cauſe to be decided by carnal Reaſon; neither regard what it telleth you: for if you take that way, and turn not back, you can never come to Chriſt, no way to him that way. Learn of the Lord Chriſt, (for his Word is faithful, and his Promiſe ſure) and there you ſhall find a Tower of Reſt as ſtrong as Mount *Sion*. It is that Word whereby we ſhall be judged at the laſt great Day, when ſenſe and

feeling shall be cast over the Bar for Deceivers and never come into Court again. And thus much of the four Cures. It rests that I now propound four Rules, by which a Man may know how to order himself, and so to walk, that he may keep a streight course by the Word, and not turn aside to one hand, or other, from that guide of his way. And thus walking, he may get into his hands the Evidences that can assure him of a Rest perpetual, and establish his Mind with perfect Peace. For they work none Iniquity, that walk in this way.

Rules to direct a Christian how to use the Word of God for his Evidence, or Assurance with Peace.

Rule 1. The first of these Rules teacheth to use the Word of God aright: for as thou must in all things that concern thy Soul repair to the Word; so thou must consider thine own Uprightness by it, and see what Work is in thy Soul that is able to answer the Word, and to testify that the

the work of Grace is there. And here be ſure to take thy Soul at the beſt: do not always pore upon the worſt that is in it, nor upon thy Failings, nor that that can only accuſe thee; but if there be any thing there that may juſtly ſpeak for thee, neglect not that. It is an Injuſtice for any Court to hear one ſide and not another. The Scripture is a Text of Juſtice, and the Lord doth not lye at catch with his Children, but takes them at the beſt: as *Rom.* 4. 22. it is therefore ſaid that *Abraham believed the Promiſe, and it was imputed to him for Righteouſneſs.* Indeed, as in *Gen.* 12. he had ſome doubtings; but God took him at the beſt: and ſpeaks this of his Faith. So *Sarah* is ſpoken of, as of a gracious Woman; and of a pattern for Women, by calling her Husband *Lord*; which was a ſign of Reverence to her Huſband, and an humble Heart to the Lord: and yet we read that ſhe derided the Meſſage of the Lord by the Angel: the Lord buries that, and only ſpeaks of that which was to

1 Pet. 3. 6. Gen. 18. 12.

her Commendation, and so took her at her best too. Now as the Lord dealt with these, so should we with our selves: whatsoever is found sincere and upright in us, that should we observe, as well as that which is not so; nay, that rather and before the other. If a Man should have his Cause handled in any Court of Justice after this fashion; namely, that (there) should only be observed what is failing in the Cause, and never that that makes for it; the best Cause that is might go to the ground: therefore the Court will hear all read: as every Bond or Bill that shall come in, and every matter of Agreement; briefly, every thing: the cry will be, Let all be read. Again, suppose a Man have a Bond or other Instrument in Court, and that the Lawyer only doth open and read the failings in it, and that which seems to make against the Party: If the Judg only hear that, how can it but go against that side? Therefore that Party saith, Good my Lord hear all. Now when all is read: those Defects are corrected, and the

the Cauſe goes well, which had not been ſo, if that Bond or Deed, or other Inſtrument had been read to halves, not throughly. So when Men ſhall bring in ſo many and main Indictments againſt themſelves, and ſay, Oh what Pride and Stubbornneſs is in my Heart! Oh how weak am I, and dull, and dead, and backward to holy Duties! Oh how careleſs of enjoying Communion with God! how negligent in ſifting and trying my own Heart, in watching over my ſenſes, and mourning in ſecret for my daily failings! Though this were ſo, yet if Men will ſee no more (and theſe too much) no marvel if they trouble their own Houſe, or if Satan by their own Words judg them. To ſuch an one therefore I ſay, All that thou ſayeſt may be true, but art thou not troubled with theſe failings? and are they not the greateſt Grief that thy Soul hath? Yes, ſaith the poor Soul, I confeſs my Heart is vexed, and my Soul grieved for them; and I could be content to be any thing that I could not

be so. Now here on this side, and take the best. For, as it is with a Man's Hand and the Staff, so it is here. I compare the Promise to a Staff: you know the back of a Man's Hand cannot take hold of the Staff; but the palm of his Hand can. So turn thou the right side of thy Soul to the Promise, and then thou may'st take by it: but we take not by it, because we turn the back-side of our Hearts to the Promise: for then, the Soul saith, Oh my Stubbornness is great, and mine Inabilities grievous, and Corruptions many. But this is the wrong side; which will ever hinder thee from taking hold of the Promise. But turn to the right side, and then say, My Soul hates these, and my Soul is right-weary of them. Oh this is the right side; turn to that, and thou art well. This for the first Rule.

Rule 2. Now for the second; and secondly, Labour to have thy Conscience setled and established in that Truth, which now out of the Word thou hast gotten to bear witness of the

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Work of Grace in thee. For if there be any want of the aſſurance of God's Love, and if the evidence of the Work of Grace come not roundly in, but there be ſome guilt of Sin ſtill remaining; Conſcience will make new Stirs, and breed new Broils, and continually move and unquiet the Heart Therefore as it is good to have our judgment informed by the Word, when we ſee the Good that is in us, ſo it is meet we ſhould make Conſcience perſuaded of it, ſo as Conſcience may ſpeak for us, and all be made ſtreight. Otherwiſe, as the Debtor that is indebted to many Creditors, if he agree not with all, or with all ſave one, that one may come upon him as well as all the reſt: So for the poor diſtreſſed Soul that lies at the Mercy of the Lord, and is ſo deep in Arrearages to the Law, that he cannot wind out; if he labour not to ſtill Conſcience, and what is elſe againſt him, in every Point as well as in ſome; if he leave one undiſcharged, that one may ſet his Conſcience againſt him, as well as an hundred.

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The want of this, is cause why new Suits and new Bills are daily put in against us: only because Conscience is not pacified, nor all quieted. And now take a poor Sinner that hath all his Doubts and Objections answered; come to him, and say, Are all these all your Doubts and Objections? he will say, Yea. And are they all answered? here he will say, Yea too. And have you now any thing to say against that which hath been made known unto you? No not now. But say to him again, Did your Conscience say to you, It is a Sin to say you have no Grace? here he demurs and stops, and says, No, I dare not say so, but I rather say the contrary. And now mark what he says: All the Books are crost, and all Objections answered, and yet Consciences puts in a new Plea, because haply it was not satisfied to the full, and in every parcel of Aberration.

And now come to him again, and say, You are sometimes captivated by Sin, are you not? And are you

you willing to be at God's free disposé, and that he should pluck away all your Corruptions, as it were Shackles from you, are you not?

Oh, saith the poor Sinner, I must needs yield to that. Then I affirm to thy Soul, that this is a Work of true Grace. Here (Therefore) let Conscience be fully satisfied. But how satisfied? Thus: Cancel all self-Accusations, and this will quit all Scores, and clear the Heart, scattering all Clouds that mist it. This will cast out all Cavils, and all new Bills against us: *For if our Consciences condemn us not, then we have Boldness towards God.* We must then stop the Mouth of Conscience; that is, be convinced, and agree, that it is a Sin to say, God hath not wrought this work of Grace in the Heart, when it is so clear he hath. For tho sense and feeling be (as it sometimes will be) gone, yet Conscience remembers the Day and Year when the Sinner had a clear Evidence of God's Love, and therefore saith, Lord thou knowest it, and thou didst say out of thy Word

Word at such a time, that the Heart of this poor Soul was upright and sincere before thee.

And here it should be with a poor Sinner, as with a wise Man, when he would make his Lands sure unto him and his posterity by Evidences and Writings sealed: He is not content here only to have his Evidences in his own keeping, but will have them inrolled in Chancery, such a Year, and such a Day: that if he should lose his Deeds, he might be sure where to find them. So it should be with the distressed Soul; it should not only be willing to have all Objections to the contrary of it answered; but it should further get them recorded in the Court of Conscience, as in Chancery; that when sense and feeling are lost, yet it may readily go to that High Court of Conscience, and there find the Day and Year when God's Love was made sure unto it. This for the second Rule.

Rule 3. For the third: Thirdly, We should strive, and that mightily, to have our Hearts over-powered with the evidence

dence that Reason and Conscience make good unto us; that so we may quietly receive, and calmly welcom it; yea, and yield and subject our Hearts to the truth of it. But here we all stick: and there are three things in the Soul of a Man; three, I say, that abet all these Quarrels and Oppositions against the Evidences of the Word in that Man. The first; for 1. Reason Objects. 2. The second; Then Conscience accuseth. And the third; 3. The Will of Man will not submit. And here we find by experience, that when a Man hath stilled Conscience, and silenced all Reasons to the contrary of his Peace; yet such is the Iron of the stubborn Heart, that nothing can bar it; but still it maintains, and will, some gain-saying and some new quarrels against the Truth and it self. Besides, it keeps on foot even that that hath been long ago answered, and let down: Nay, that a Man would think had been buried in a deep Grave (as deep as Hell) never to rise again. Now in this case it is with a poor Sin-

Sinner, as with a Man that hath a contentious Adversary. Haply the Cause that they two have in Hand, hath been tried in all Courts of Law, and at last comes to the Chancery: And there it is concluded against the cavilling Adversary, as in the other Courts; there all matters are as well stated and ordered as a Man would wish, and as an honest Man would grant: Yet will not this Man, that is so contentious, be so concluded, or so yield, but will to the Law again with a back-Suit, and then, and upon that old Grudg, stake down all he hath, and sell all to his Shirt. His Will he will have, whatever it cost him. Nor will he give over, till the Judg doth come to take notice of him, and so to cast out his Cause with himself, whom therefore he commits to Prison, and saith, Sirrah, these matters were (all of them) long ago answered, and will you trouble us again, not with new Matters, but will old Quarrels?

Just so it is with the Heart even of a gracious Man sometimes, and one

one that is humbled in ſome meaſure; and could be content to yield to the commanding Power of God's Word, and to the witneſs of his own Conſcience: and therefore ſaith, My Condition is better than I thought it was; yet there is an old proud, ſelf-will'd Heart ſtill in me; an Heart that will not be quieted nor ſaid unto; but ſtill will be quarrelſome, and maintain the old Exception. For though all Reaſons are well confuted, and Conſcience bears witneſs it is ſo; and the Miniſter, as the Judg under Chriſt, caſt out the Cauſe: yet (obſerve it) the poor diſtreſſed Sinner will keep the old road of objecting againſt himſelf: And though he hath been anſwered fully, and to every point, not many hours before; yet he keeps old matters ſtill freſh, and out of the Salt, till they yield a foul Scent to all that come within the hearing of them. And thus, even when a Man would think he ſhould not dare to come in Court with ſuch old caſhiered ſtuff; yet that proud ſelf-will'd Heart will be doing

doing still; nor will yield or give over. Have we not just cause then to labour our Hearts so far as to get them over-powered with the Authority of the Truth concerning whatsoever God reveals to them for their good? Oh therefore, poor Soul, do not reject the evidence which God makes known, and passeth upon thee for thy sure Welfare eternally. Do not, because thou hast not that Comfort that thou would'st, reject all; as if thou would'st have none at all. So then the fault here is not properly because thou canst not, but because thou wilt not receive the Promise: and this is that that so wracks and torments thy Spirit; this is that which breeds the Quarrel so hard to be compounded; and hence it is, that when Reason is satisfied, and Conscience convinced, yet the Soul is perplexed still. For put this Question to it, and say unto it; Are you perswaded that the Lord hath done you this good, that he will shew an everlasting Mercy to your Soul? and it will say no; and that all the World

World ſhall not perſwade it of that. Miniſters are merciful (will ſuch a diſtempered Soul ſay) and Chriſtians are charitable, and loth to diſpleaſe too much, or to diſcourage one in my caſe, or do to me as I ſhould do to them: but did they know me indeed, they would never think thus of me: certainly I ſhall never find it ſo. What? have I Grace? all the World ſhall never perſwade me to it. Mark what I ſay: This is meerly thy Pride and Self-willedneſs, that will not receive that good which God is willing to give thee. But repent, or this Pride of thy pettiſh Heart will coſt thee dear, one day; I wiſh not.

But ſome will ſay, How can you make this Pride? we are ever complaining of, and condemning our ſelves; And can this be Pride? *Object.*

Yes, I ſay, (and mark what I ſay) it is intolerable Pride againſt the Majeſty of Heaven: and this I make good by theſe two things. For, firſt, for a Man to follow his own Conceits and Self-willedneſs againſt *Anſw.*

againſt the Truth, the force of Reaſon, and the witneſs of the Servants of God, and his own Conſcience, cannot but be pride.

Secondly; And for a Man, becauſe he hath not what he would, to be (therefore) off the Hinges ſo, as to throw away all God's Kindneſs, and to deny the Grace that is given him: And this becauſe he cannot be Conqueror as he deſires; is not this Pride? That meaſure of Mercy which God hath already ſhewed to thy Soul, is incomprehenſible, beyond Man's reach; and yet becauſe thou canſt not have what thou would'ſt, thou wilt have nothing at all. Juſt as if a Man that hath the Law on his ſide, and his Eſtate ſetled on him, ſhould, becauſe his Evidences are not written in great golden Letters, nor in the largeſt Royal Paper, throw all away. This is your caſe: for ſo you, becauſe you have not ſo much of Grace, or with ſuch a ſweetneſs as you would, you deny you have any. But have you no Humility, becauſe none to your Mind, or not ſo much,

or

or not in ſuch a manner as you require? Oh Pride; and Pride in the higheſt degree!

Theſe things conſider'd, labour to bring your Hearts more down in a holy Subjection to God's meaſure and time. And think it your Duty, as well to receive Comfort when God offers it upon good terms, as to do any Duty commanded. And know that it is as truly a Sin (though of a higher ſize) to reject Mercy when God offers it, as to kill a Man, which God hath forbidden. I ſay, Not as much; for I know there is odds in the degree. Therefore you (the Saints of God) that have been thus peſter'd, and thus poſſeſt to become your own Enemies, remember (when your Hearts begin thus to ſlide away) to take yout Hearts unto you, and not to give them the Reigns at ſuch deſperate Concluſions againſt God and Conſcience. Deal better with you Souls, and ſay, Good Lord, this is the proud unyielding Diſtemper of this vile Heart of mine. For, what would I have? Is not God's Word clear

clear in this point, and my Conscience satisfied? Do not the Ministers of God affirm my state to be good? and shall I thus dishonour God, and slight them?

Object. But what saith the poor Soul to this? Must I eat mine own Words? Must I say and unsay? say I have Grace, when before I said, I had none?

Answ. Yes and be thankful too to God that you may say so. Is it not better for you to cross your own Flesh, than to cross God's Spirit? Take notice of this, and fear lest that proud and peevish Soul of yours (which now refuseth Consolation when God offers it) be forced to fare as a Man that eats his own Flesh, and so to come upon her Knees for Comfort, and get none to her dying day. For though God will save you at last, yet (mean while) you shall have an Hell upon Earth before this be.

One would have thought it had been great Humility in *Peter* to refuse to let Christ *wash his Feet*; but it was no such matter. Indeed nothing

Je ſs

leſs; therefore Chriſt takes him up roundly for it (which is indeed, the only way to cure ſuch a Diſtemper as this) *If I waſh thee not, thou haſt no part in me.* If you will needs have your own way, and humour your ſelf, and will not be perſwaded; you may go down to Hell in the mind. *Peter* might have pauſed here, and taken Breath, but did not: his ſtout Stomach quickly came down, and he preſently ſaid, Then, *Lord, not only my Feet, but my Hands, and Head,* and all. It is the Humility of a good Heart, to take what God offers. Moſt Chriſtians think they are humble-hearted, when yet they are ſo far proud, as to give way to this fullen Diſpoſition. Therefore labour to over-maſter this over-ſoaring Heart of thine, with the Authority of the Word of God; and be ſure to receive Mercy while God offers it, leſt he draw in, and take away the Comfort of his Spirit from thee, and make thee go howling and roaring to thy Grave. Tho he bring the to Heaven in the end; yet thou may'ſt have

John 13. 8, 9.

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an uncomfortable Hell before thou comest thither.

Rule 4. So for the third Rule, the last followeth. The last Rule is this: Maintain the good Work which thy Heart hath submitted unto, and keep it as the best thing in thy House, and (of Treasure) the best under Heaven. And then, when thou hast by it obtained certain Evidence that thy Estate is good; hear nothing against it, but stick fast to it, as to thy Life. Regard nothing (what is not in the Word) to the contrary of that Evidence of thy Salvation; that I mean, which thou hast been perswaded of by the Word of Truth. And here, if Satan or carnal Reason have any thing to say against thee, let them bring Scripture, and then yield to it in the true sense; but without the Word hear nothing. Look as it is with a Man that is at law for Lands; if he have his Adversary on the hip, and have gotten some Advantage against him, he will keep him there, and hold him to the point. So do thou in a better case. For, if a Man will follow every

very wrangling Lawyer at every impertinent quillet or out-leap, he muſt never look for an end of lawing: and it is the faſhion of many Atturneys, rather to breed Quarrels, than to kill them in the Conception. So in this caſe, he that will quarrel where he may reſolve, ſhall never have done. And therefore hold to the main point. Deal with Satan as with a ſubtil Adverſary that is full of Wiles and Fetches. It is the cunning of the Enemy to lead you aſide: and he will have many Vagaries, if you be in a good Way, to bring you out: But be ſure to hold to that Truth which you have received from the evidence of the Word, and the witneſs of Conſcience. When a Man hath gotten ſome Comfort, then the Devil begins to play the Lawyer in this or the like manner.

How the Saint being tempted, may anſwer Satan's Accuſations.

Doeſt thou not ſee how weak and poor thou art? how deſtitute of all *Sinner.*

saving Grace, and how contrary thou walkest to God?

Sinner. It is true (saith the Soul) yet it is as true that he that confesseth and forsaketh his Sin shall find Mercy.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) doest thou not see that thou art full of Pride and Weakness, and secretly unwilling to come to Duties?

Sinner. It is true (saith the Soul) I am so, yet I hate, and desire to forsake this way, and therefore shall find Mercy; the Word saith so.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) are you of God's Counsel? secret things belong to God.

Sinner. Indeed (saith the Soul) I know not what God's secret Will is; yet that I know, that the Word saith; which is, *He hath no Pleasure in the Death of a Sinner*, but invites sinners daily to come unto him.

Satan. But (saith the Devil) many cozen themselves: Mercy is as a black Swan, a rare Bird; and few obtain it;

it: and why (then) may not you be cozened as well as others?

But (ſaith the Soul) the Lord will not cozen me, and the Lord knows my Heart; and the Word knows what the Lord knows. *Sinner.*

But (ſaith the Devil) may not you be deceived in the Letter of the Word? the Word is true indeed; but how know you that you rightly apply it, and that the Word and your Heart ſute together? *Satan.*

Why (ſaith the Soul) I deſire as earneſtly to have my Sin purged, as I do to have it pardoned. I know my Heart by the Word, and to the Word I repair; and the Lord knows that I hate all Sin inwardly, and reform it outwardly, to my weak Power; and therefore I know I ſhall find Mercy. Shew me a place of Scripture that ſaith I do not rightly apply the Word, and I believe it; but I will not believe thee; for thou art, as thou waſt from the beginning, a Lyer. Thus hold to the Word, and the Devil will be tired, weary, and leave thee; keep you *Sinner.*

here, for if he catch you a wandring after sense and feeling, you are gone. The Prophet saith: *Thou through thy Commandments hast made me wiser than my Enemies, for they are ever with me.* Satan is wise by long Experience; and the Flesh, and carnal Reason, and the World are wise too: but blessed be our God that makes every poor ignorant Servant of his wiser than all these. But how? the Word must ever be in your hands, and the Meditation of it in your Hearts: it must be always with you; and you must keep it with you daily: for that will make you not to know only what is amiss, but to get ground against Corruption, and whatsoever else may hinder your Peace with God and with your selves.

Psal. 119. 98.

Satan deals in this case with the Soul, as the Enemies in War: when *Joshua* defeated the Men of *Ai*, he got them ont of the City; and then they that lay in ambush went and took it, and burnt it with Fire. So the Devil doth. Our Castle or City is

Josh. 8. 19.

is the Promises, the Word and Ordinances of God; Now if the Devil can but get you out of this Castle, he hath you where he would: if you will look after every Bird that flies, and listen after every Word of carnal Reason and Temptation that comes, you are gone: If he can get you from the sure Hold of the Promise, he will entangle you in his Snare of Unbelief, and so prevail against you.

Little Children, if ye abide in God's Commandments, ye abide in God, saith the Apostle. As if he had said, Children, your Enemies are many, and great, and cunning, therefore keep home, and within the Walls of your sure hope, and then you are well, whatsoever Weather is up. It is the fashion of Parents, if their Children run abroad and catch a knock, to tell them that they are well enough served; you might have kept at home when you had warning. So Here. 1 John 2. 28.

The issue of the Point is this: Judg thy Soul by the Word, and look upon that sacred Piece in the Glass of

it self: And here, let it bear witness for thee: and what the Word of God doth evidence to thee, that do thou maintain, and hear nothing against it. This is the way to receive constant Comfort, and the way to go on chearfully in thy Christian course. Let Quarrels, Troubles, and Temptations come, yet keep those within the Doors, and rest thy self upon the Riches of that Grace that is in Christ Jesus. Then you may be for ever comforted, and go singing to Heaven, and merrily to your Graves, though you meet with never so many Temptations and Oppositions, crossing your way.

Now follow some means to obtain an Interest in the Promises.

It resteth that I shew you some means whereby a Man may so improve his time, that at last he may obtain this blessed Estate of being merry in the Lord. The means are four. But before I begin with them, you must first know that we may use

uſe the means, and yet find no means under Heaven to do it, except God ſtrike the Stroke. You muſt therefore wait upon God, and the Spirit of God in the uſe of the means for this matter, by believing rightly to your aſſurance. For, ſo the Text ſaith, *To you it is given to believe*; it muſt be given therefore: and Faith is the free gift of God. It is God then that muſt do it; who yet will not do it without us, being reaſonable Men and Women in the power of willing. Again, the Lord affords us means; yet not to uſe them, and give him the ſlip. And here it is a good ſaying; Let the Lord do what he will, and let us do what we ſhould. We muſt not think when we have the means, that we can get Faith preſently: for, as *Paul* ſaith, *The ſame Power that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, muſt make us able to believe*; or elſe all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Miniſters on Earth, and all the help that Men and Means can give us, will do us no good. Now the Means are of divers kinds: as, hearing Eph. 1. 20.

and Prayer, and Sacraments, which are the Conduits from which God communicates Faith. But I let them pass, and fasten upon those which are needful for feeble Christians, to the bringing of them into this blessed Estate of rightly believing. And these are such as follow.

1. *Means.* First; We must, as much as in us lies, labour to pull away all those carnal outward stays that the Soul leans upon, and all other like Succours, and whatsoever Contentment it is, which a poor Sinner doth betake himself to, as to his Refuge, for Relief and Help; that when all these are taken from us, we may be forced to go for Succour thither, where right Succour is to be had. It is a thing natural to us all, even from our first Parents, a desire to have the Staff in our own Hands, and to be able to supply our selves of all Necessaries, without being beholden to others, or to any.

Now therefore the way to make the Soul to lean upon Christ, is, to pluck away all those deceiving Props.

Props. The last thing we flye unto, is the Promise; which if we could find good any where else than in Christ, we would never go to him for it. God hears last of us; and therefore here we should do with our selves, as the Enemy doth with a City besieged, when he would make the Inhabitants, or those that keep it, to yield; The way he takes is to famish them, to cut off all Provision, and stop all Passages, so that none can come to relieve them; then they presently yield themselves to the Mercy of the Assailant: so it is with our Nature. And seeing it is so that we are still trusting to our own Strengths, and relying upon some thing our of own, the best way were to famish the Heart, by cutting off all the Means and Comforts whereby the same is succoured, and quieted; but not rightly in Christ. For when the Heart is thus famished, it will then seek out to a Saviour, and there be, because there is no other thing or means otherwise to help it.

Mat. 5. 26, 27. The poor Woman in the Goſpel had ſpent all her Goods upon the Phyſicians; and if ſhe had had but a little means left, yea, but one Farthing token (for any thing I know, or doth appear) ſhe would never have gone to Chriſt: But when all theſe failed, then ſhe was forced to ſeek to Chriſt, that was ready and willing to do that for her, and more than ſhe deſired. Our Souls muſt have ſomething to bear upon; and they cannot ſubſiſt without ſome under-Props. Hereupon therefore, when all our carnal Hopes are taken from us, we ſtay (as we muſt needs) upon the Promiſe, becauſe we have nothing elſe to reſt upon. Yet it is not required (though I thus ſpeak) that a Man ſhould caſt away all outward Comforts, ſuch as God affords him for the interim here, Oh no: but only this; That (though he have much this way) yet that he labour to get his Heart to ſee and acknowledg the inſufficiency and nothingneſs of them all, till he have the ſuperlative Comfort, Chriſt, above

bove all; and not to repoſe in them (having them) as ſome do, making them our whole Contentment, and ſole Reſt: For then they are but lying Vanities, and broken Staves, which will not only cozen us, but pierce us too, and that deeply.

And now when the Soul ſeeth that theſe things cannot ſuccour it, but lay it in worſe caſe; a Man will then be content to have his Heart divorced from them. And here it is with the Soul as it was with *Noah's Dove*, when the Ark began to reſt upon the Mountain of *Ararat*: *Noah* then ſent out the Dove; but the Dove *found no reſt for the ſole of her Foot*. No queſtion there were many dead Carcaſes to ſettle upon; but the Dove found no reſt, till ſhe came to the Ark again. So when a Man finds no reſt in any thing the Creature affords, and can get no footing for the Soul there to ſtay it ſelf upon; then it betakes it ſelf to Chriſt the Ark, and goes home to the Promiſe, and reſts there, and expects from thence what is needful

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for it. As (therefore) in the Art of Swimming; he that will swim, must pluck his Feet from the bottom, and commit himself to the Stream to bear him up: so in this our purpose to Heaven, we must draw our Hearts from these vain things below, and these from them; and though we have Honour and Preferments, yet we must put no Confidence in them, but pluck our Affections, as it were Feet from them, and learn by our believing to commit our selves wholly to the power of the Promise, and thence to receive Comfort, and permanent abiding.

Let not the Gods of this World, then, as Honour, and Profit, and Pleasures, deceive thee. Did the Pride of *Pharaoh*'s Heart deliver him? Did the Riches of the rich Man in Hell save him? Did *Herod*'s Applause that he had, do him any good? Did these Gods secure them? nay, have they not left them in the lurch? Therefore let us take our Hearts off from these things, and (in comparison to those of our better Life) have a base

baſe eſteem of them, and ſee ſo great a Vanity and Emptineſs, and Inſufficiency in them all, that we may be forced to ſeek to Chriſt, and ſay as *David*, *Help, Lord*; *for vain is the Help of Man.* Labour we further to ſee the privy pranks of our own Hearts, and to hunt out all thoſe mazes, and turnings and windings of our ſubtile Souls: for here it is wonderful to ſee how the Soul is ready to hang her Comforts upon every Hedg, and to ſhift and ſhark in every by-corner for them. Now when thou ſeeſt thy Heart thus ſeeking Comfort in vain helps, call it from them, and them pluck away, and up by the roots, and ſee the Emptineſs of them: then will thy Heart be fit and ready to make out to Chriſt. And this for the firſt Means.

Secondly; Therefore when this is done, there is in ſome part, ſome way made for the Promiſe to come into thy Soul; therefore labour thou in the ſecond place, to have thy Heart poſſeſſed thoroughly, and perſwaded effectually of the fulneſs of that good

good which is in the Promise, and of that satisfactory Mercy and freeness of the Grace that is in Christ, so that the Soul may be established with that full Content which is to be had in the Riches of the Promise. But mark what I say; Let us perswade our Hearts first; and not content our selves that we are able to dispute somewhat fully of the Excellency of the Promise, and of those Riches in it, through the free Grace of God in Christ. For, what is it to purpose that the Heart knows this, and knowing it, to be so fore-stall'd, that it can never come to the Promise? Therefore leave not thy Heart till it come to value the Promise by that that the Word speaketh of it in a true account. I say, Leave not thy Heart, till thou see the promise of Grace most beautiful in thine Eye, and that thy Heart may get some earnest touching the Goodness of God, and the Riches of his Grace towards thee by the same. And here bring thy Heart to know and see, that the Promise is better than all the Riches and Honours

Honours that thou canſt have, or the World can beſtow: for ſo we read; *They that* know thee, *will truſt in thee, for thou, Lord, haſt never failed them that ſeek thee.* If thou knoweſt and wilt believe this, this kind of Knowledg and Perſwaſion cannot but breed Confidence and Reſolution, and (conſequently) quiet the Heart. We dare truſt a Friend whoſe Faithfulneſs we have tried; and we reſt upon that which we know by the ſure Card of Experience. The Promiſes of God are (all of them) as true as Goſpel. Seek from one end of the Heaven to the other; turn all the Bible over, and ſee if ever any Man leaned on the Promiſe, and the Lord did not perform what he had promiſed for the good of his Soul. *Except the Lord had been my Delight, I ſhould have periſhed in my Troubles,* (ſaith *David.*) *My Fleſh faileth, and my Heart alſo; but thou art the Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* But here lies a great matter, a Work of marvellous difficulty and great neceſſity; and therefore, that thy Heart

Pſal. 9. 10.

Pſal. 119. 92.
Pſal. 73. 26.

Heart may sit down satisfied with the sufficiency of the Promise. I will propound three Rules how the Promise may be improved and conduce to thy singular Benefit here and hereafter.

Rule 1. How to improve the Promises for our Benefit.

For the first of these Rules: Labour daily to present thy Soul a greater good in the Promise, than thou canst see any where else. It is a Man's Skill, (and it should be his Endeavour) daily to dog his Heart, and to look what it is that the Heart desires most; and accordingly to present the greatest good unto it. And what may that be? even that which hath more of Contentment in it, than any thing else in the World. And here, we should deal with our Hearts as Men will with a corrupt Justice, when he would have him to be on his side: there, the only way is to bribe him, but though this be sinful in this case, yet it is good to bribe (as it were) the corrupt Heart with the Goodness of the Promise; that so the Heart may cleave to it, and long after it. Do Honours,

nours, or Riches, or the applauſe of Men, or any earthly Pleaſures offer thee Content and Satisfaction? then perſwade thy Heart there is a greater worth in the Promiſe, than can be had in all them. For here is *an exceeding weight of Glory:* and he that hath it ſhall be made a *King*, and ſhall have that Glory that will *never fade*. Further, doth thy Heart hanker after earthly Joy and Mirth? thou ſhalt find more Joy in the Promiſe, than in the cracking of theſe Thorns. Doth thy Heart hanker after Riches? tell thy Heart that there are *unſearchable Riches in Chriſt*, and that through him, we have Title to all the Promiſes of this Life and a better. We know that he that offers moſt for the Bargain hath it: therefore we ſhould obſerve the goings out of our Hearts, and what offers are made to give them the beſt content, and with ſuch to preſent them. This the Promiſe doth; and this with a greater good in God, than in all things in the World beſide. Therefore; *Oh the height and depth,*

and

and length and breadth of the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!

The consideration of so much, should not only work a longing after Christ, and the Promise; but fill our faces with shame and confusion, that ever we should set so light by such riches of Mercy, and walk unworthy of so great Salvation. Could we comprehend the unmeasurable dimensions of God's Love and Goodness revealed in his Word; O how would our Hearts be enflamed towards him? When the Sinner thinks thus with himself; I that have done all that I could against so good a God, that my Heart even bleeds to think of it, there was no Name under Heaven that I tore in pieces more, or so much as God's Name; his *Wounds*, and *Life*, and *Heart-Blood* I have rent and torn a thousand times. Nay, there was no Command in the World that my Soul so much despised, as the Command of the Lord Jesus. There was no Spirit which ever spake to me, which I so much resisted as the Spirit of the Al-

Almighty. Oh how many ſweet Motions hath the Lord let into my Soul, thereby to force me from my Courſes ſo baſe, and Practices ſo ſinful? By how many Mercies hath he allured me, by how many gracious Promiſes hath he invited me; by how much of his Goodneſs provoked me to forſake my Sins, and to turn unto him? But I have flown in the Face of his *Miniſters*, and *bleſſed Spirit*, and rejected all terms of Reconciliation. If I had lien in a Dungeon, and been plagued with Torments all my Life time, yea, though I could have had another World full of Miſery to live in, I ſhould count it infinite Mercy, ſo the Lord would paſs by my ſinful Miſcarriages, and pardon theſe inward Inſurrections.

But that God ſhould ſend his deareſt *Son* to love me, and that ſo incomparably, and ſo unconceivably as that I cou'd not poſſibly hate him ſo much, as he loved and affected me; that I could not ſo exceed in Unkindneſs towards him, as he hath exceeded in tender Kindneſs towards me;

What

What a Love is this? What unkindneſs for ſo great Love? Were it not righteous with God, never to ſpeak Comfort more to thy Soul, that have ſo lightly eſteemed his Promiſe, and ſweet word of Comfort? Had it not been juſt with him now to ſit at the catcth, and to take all this (as he well might) for an advantage againſt me? Was it not juſt that I, which lived in Sin, ſhould have periſhed in my Sins? and as juſt that I who have ſo much loved Corruption, ſhould have reaped the bitter Fruit of it, long ere this? But that the Lord ſhould find an Enemy, and not ſlay him; nay, that he ſhould give his beloved *Son* out of his own Boſome to ſave him, is a Love not to be expreſſed. Oh the *height* of this Mercy beyond all deſire or thought! Oh the *breadth* of this Mercy, a breadth without any bounds! Oh the *length* of this Mercy, a length beyond all times! Oh the *depth* of this Mercy, a Profundity beyond all Expreſſion!

Labour here (therefore) to have acceſs

acceſs to the Promiſe, and to bring thy Soul unto it. Here ſpeak a good Word for it, and ſay; Stand off Profits, and Pleaſures, and Preferments; room for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Thus ſpeak, and ſet a peerleſs moſt excellent Price upon the Promiſe: and be ſure of this (for it is a ſure Rule) whatſoever the Soul doth account as beſt, that it will chuſe, and leave all others for it. Therefore if the Soul could once out-bid the World, and out-ſhoot the Devil in his own Bow, and put by all thoſe things which the Devil caſts as rubs in its way of coming to the Promiſe; this labour would be a Work of great gain, and uſher in the Promiſe it ſelf. For example, as thus: when thou ſeeſt thy Heart look after Friends; let thoſe Friends uſher the way to think on the infinite Love and Favour of God in Chriſt, that Friend, as he calls himſelf: and when thy Heart would hunt after Wealth, let this uſher a way to the Promiſe, and ſay, If the Heart find ſuch content in Riches, what ſhould it find in the Riches of God's

God's Grace in Christ! And thus present a greater good from the Promise than any, from any thing else; and thou dealest safely and well for thy self. This for the first Rule.

2. The second Rule is; Labour to bring thy Heart to this, That all the things in the World without the Promise are nothing: and that if thou hadst all that the Earth can afford, and not it, thou hast gotten but the Wind, or that which will rather be a Curse unto thee than a Blessing: For, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for.* It gives a kind of being and subsistence to all. So that there is no subsistence in Honour or Riches, if they subsist not by Faith; and without Faith they are Cloggs and Snares to us, no Helpers; except Faith give them their Denomination, and a Blessing therewith, they are poor and empty things. Our Prayers, if they want Faith in the Promise, are Prayers of no substance; Words, and nothing else. On the other side, the most broken and chattering Prayers of a poor Soul, when

Heb. 11. 1.

a poor Creature can ſcarce utter five Words with any ſenſe; yet theſe (how weak ſoever) mingled with Faith, are a very powerful Prayer. So all your hearing, and my preaching hangs upon Faith; otherwiſe they are but loſt Labour, wanting that that gives a kind of being to whatſoever I ſpeak, or you hear. This for the ſecond Rule.

The third Rule in this ſecond of the means, is this: Labour to acquaint thy Heart with that good, which the Promiſe promiſeth: and this, before carnal Reaſon comes and poſſeſſes thy Heart. Remember here that the Promiſe is moſt ſure, and will come when it ſhall be moſt ſeaſonable, and beſt for thee, and when God ſees it moſt fit; for then, we ſhall moſt certainly have it. *Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may receive Comfort and Mercy in time of need.* Not when we ſee it fit, but when God ſees it fit and profitable. But this it is which carries away many. Sometimes they are a little affected with the excellency of the Riches of God's 3. Heb. 4. 16.

God's Grace in Christ, and seeing what great things the Lord hath done for their Soul, they say; O that I were such a one; and O that I might die the death of the Righteous! But when it comes so to pass that they have not what presently they expect, then they cast away their Hope; and then the good Promise of GOD being out of request, the Devil presently steps in and wonderfully prevails with them; They say with the Prophet, *When the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither*
Heb. 3. 17. *shall the Fruit be on the Vine, when the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and yield no Fruit, then will I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.* But where no Blossoms are, nor Fruits appear, there all Joy goes to ground. We do not consider that Comfort from the Promise, and from the Lord Jesus, is then most seasonable, when we have most need, and (consequently) may receive most good by it: for then may we be sure to have the Promise so to surprise our Heart, that it shall be possessed and

and made happy with the All-ſufficiency of God. But we go not ſo far. This for the ſecond Rule.

In the third place, look for all the good which thou needeſt and canſt deſire from that Sufficiency which is in the Promiſe; and do not think of thy ſelf to add any good unto it, but go to it for all thy good: For, *there* are all the Cords of Mercy that muſt draw thee; and *there* is that All-ſufficiency that can ſupply thee, and therefore look for all from thence, but think to bring nothing thither; nothing (I ſay) that can be of Power to enable thee to a Power of believing. 3. *Means.*

And here, it is a weak Plea for a Man to ſay, I dare not look to the Promiſe, I cannot believe it; for if I could (and O that I could) then I might expect ſome good Fruit from it. *Object.*

To anſwer this, Thou ſhalt never believe upon theſe Terms; for, thou muſt not firſt have Faith, and then go to the Promiſe, but muſt firſt go to the Promiſe for the Power *Anſw.*

of that Faith; from it thou must receive power to believe, And therefore say with the Prophet, *O Lord remember thy Word to thy Servant, wherein thou hast caused me to trust.* When Men are enlarged in Love to a Man, and make fair Weather of Promises unto him; this perswades him to trust unto them, and to relye upon them for good to come, therefore he saith, I durst never so much as have thought of it, much less expected it, if you had not promised so much.

Psal. 119. 49.

And even so here, the Promise of God (made to the Soul) makes the Soul to rest upon what is promised.

To expect Faith without a Promise, is as if a Man should expect a crop of Corn without Seed; for the Promise is the immortal Seed of God's Word, whereby the Spirit breeds this Faith in the Hearts of all that are his. So Christ, *The Hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it, shall live:* It is spoken of raising of a dead Man from

Joh. 5. 25.

from the grave of Sin, First, There is the Voice of Christ to the Soul, before there can be an Eccho again of that Soul to Christ; and so the power of the Promise must first come to the Soul, and we must first hear the Voice of God in the Promise, before we can return an Eccho back again to the Lord: The Lord must say, *Come to me*, before the Soul can say, *I come, Lord.* Therefore when thou seest much deadness, and dead unfitness of heart in thee to the Promise, do not thou then leave, and give off, and say, Thus I am, and so it is with me, and so an end; but go to the Promise and say, Whatsoever Frailties I find in my self, yet I will look to the Lord, and to his Promise; for if I want Faith, the Promise must settle me, and I must not bring Faith to the Promise, but receive Faith from it to believe; and therefore I will wait upon God till he please to work it. Thus for the third Rule.

4. *Means.*

And now in the last place, and lastly, labour to submit to the most equal condition of the Promise, not

making more Conditions there than God hath made. Now the Promise requires no more of a Man, but that he come and lay hold on Mercy; therefore do thou require no more. There is enough in the Promise to do thee good; therefore do thou expect all good from it, and be content there to take of God whatsoever he hath therein offered to thy Faith. *Buy without Money*, saith the Prophet: This is the Condition that God offers Mercy upon, buy Wine and Milk, that is, Grace and Salvation without Money, that is, without any Sufficiency of your own. If a Man should go running up and down to borrow Money before he comes to buy, he may famish before he can come: So the Lord offering Christ's Mercy and Salvation without our cost, and saying, Come, take it without Money; and yet we will run up and down to borrow Money of our *Prayers* and other *Duties* also, and from our *Prayer against Corruption*, we may be starved spiritually before we can buy at that hand. If we

Isa. 55. 12.

go

go this way to work, we may quickly lose our Labour, and our selves. And therefore make God's Commodities no dearer than God himself makes them. Many a poor Soul not remembring this, is kept from coming to the Promise: For, Oh, saith one; if I were able to master my Sins and Distempers as such a one can do, then I might with boldness believe. But this is to bring Money: but art thou not content to have Christ of free cost, so as he may have thee, and rule in thee, and supply what is wanting to thee, and open thy Stores, and heal thy Corruptions? Then why goest thou not to the Promise with an empty Heart, that the Lord may supply thee, and master all thy Risings, and make thee a clean Heart? But that must come afterwards, as the Lord saith, *When I passed by thee, and saw thee in thy Blood,* Ezek. 16. 8, 9. *and behold the time was as the time of Love, and I spread my Skirt over thee, and covered thy Nakedness; yea I entred into a Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine* (that is, thou wast

content that God should marry thee in all thy Rags) *then I washed thee with Water, yea, I throughly washed away thy Blood from thee, and anointed thee with Oyl, I cloathed thee also with broidered Work.* Here we see, that Christ first marrieth the Church to himself, and then gives Grace, and passeth over his Estate to his Spouse. And now, were it not a wonderful great Folly, if some great King should make love to a poor Milk-maid, and she should put it off, and refuse the Match till she were a QUEEN; where if she will match with the King, she may be sure to be made a Queen presently. But this comes after, and not before the Marriage. So we must not look for Sanctification the first day, nor till we come to the Lord in our Christian Vocation: For this is all the Lord requires of us, namely, to see our Sins, to be weary of them, to be content that the Lord Jesus shall reveal unto us what is amiss, and seal a Pardon for it, and take it away; and (further) give us his Grace to take down the

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old Building, and to set up a new one in us after his Image; For then the Lord will bring us to himself; and into the Wedding-Chamber; and then through his great Mercy, all our Corruption shall fall to the ground. And when the Lord hath brought thy unfaithful Heart to believe; then labour to husband this Grace well, and to improve it for thy best good, and live by it; It is a marvellous great shame to see those that are born to fair means, I mean the poor Saints of God that have a right and title to Grace and Christ, yet live at such an under-rate: I would have thee live above the World, though thou hast not a Coat to cover thee, nor a House to put thy Head in; yet if thou hast Faith, thou art a rich Man; therefore husband thy Estate well. It's a shame to see some live, and husband not that Estate they have; they live as if they had it not, so full of want, so full of Care, so full Pride, so weak, and unable to master their Sins, whereas the fault is not in the power of Faith, nor the Promise, nor in

the Lord; for God doth not grudg his People of Comfort, but would have his People live chearfully and have ſtrong Conſolations and mighty aſſurance of his Love; and therefore the Text ſaith, *Rejoyce in the Lord always, and again, I ſay, rejoyce.* And ſo, *Heb. 6. 18. God hath ſworn, that by two immutable things, wherein it's impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong Conſolations:* Nay, the Lord rejoyceth in the Proſperity of his Servants, and therefore hath richly provided for you, that you may rejoyce; and in not ſo doing, we offer a great deal of Wrong to the Lord and his Promiſes, and bring an ill report upon that Grace and Mercy of his: And we hereby alſo open the Mouths of the wicked, and make them ſay, Oh, theſe preciſe People talk of quiet and contentment, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt! There is great talking of theſe things, but we could never ſee it yet. O Brethren, it's a great ſhame; are the Riches and Revenues of Faith ſo great, that a Chriſtian may live like a Man all his days?

Let

Let all the Drunkards and malicious Wretches againſt God, laugh and be merry; yet they cannot ſee one of thoſe days that a poor Saint can; yea though he lay in Priſon all his Life long, *Mat.* 17. 20. *If a Man had but Faith as a grain of Muſtard-ſeed, and ſhall ſay to this Mountain, Go hence, it ſhall be done.* Whether this be ſpoken of juſtifying Faith, or no, I will not now diſpute; but this I am ſure of, *Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flie from you*; and you may trample under all your Luſts and Corruptions: This is the Life of Faith, and this Life we may live, this Life we ought to live. If a Tradeſman have a fair Stock and quick Returns, if he goes down the wind, and begin to decline and decay; every Man will ſay, He was left marvellous well, but either he knew not how to uſe it, wanting Skill, or elſe attended not on it, wanting Care: Another Man would have lived bravely upon half of that Means which he had: So there is never a poor Chriſtian, which trades in a Chriſtian Courſe, but he

hath a fair Estate, and may live like a Man. One promise is enough to make a Man live comfortably all his days, though he were in never so much want: But if he be cast behind-hand, and goes down the wind with Comfort and Joy; and sinks because of his Pride, and Distempers, and Vexation: the fault is not in the Estate, for the Lord left him very well; he had a Childs Portion, had he hed an Heart to fear God and love him; as *David* saith, *Oh be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love and fear thy Name.* The fault was not in the Promise, that they could not, nor in his Faith that it would not help him: but he let the Promises lie by; they came into the Table, but he never cast them up, nor husbanded them aright: He had a world of Consolations, that would have given a Man Liberty in Prison, Honour in Shame and Disgrace, and Comfort in time of Distress; but he did not husband them: and therefore he advised to do as the Tradesman doth; he will not spend

of

of his ſtock, but live of his trading? O I would have every Chriſtian live of his Faith. Whatever Strength thou needeſt, fetch it from Grace in Chriſt; and whatever Comfort thou wanteſt, fetch it from Chriſt; but live by Faith, and make a good living of it too; and then thou haſt improved the Promiſe aright: bring but an empty believing Heart with thee, and the Oil will never fail, and the Meal in the Barrel will never decay, but continually ſupply thee, as it did that poor Widow.

Object. But how ſhall a Man be trained, that he get this Skill of living by Faith? Every Man hath his Shifts and Tricks, and lives by his own Devices; and the Devil hath enough of them in the World that live this Life, but the beſt Life of all is little look'd after?

Now for an anſwer, know thus much, That there are three Particulars for the training up the Heart to learn this Skill of living by Faith.

1. Firſt, We muſt labour to get matter for our Faith to work upon.

2. We

2. We must labour to fit Faith for the Work.

3. We must labour to order our Faith aright in the Work.

First, We must provide matter for our Faith to work upon: For this we see ordinarily, if a Workman want matter to work upon, either a Carpenter or the like, he must needs cease his Work, and he can go no further. And if a Mans Work fails, how can he provide for his Family? This is the complaint of poor People now adays, that they have no Work: So it is in a Christians course; many poor Christians that are newly set up, and are not aforehand in the World, they want even matter for their Faith, I mean, some are ignorant and cannot read, and some have not means of a preaching-Ministry, others have but small Parts and cannot hear, and little do they retain of what they do hear. The Promises of God not understood, nor remembred, nor rightly applied, they live marvellously poor, when they might live very comfortably in the World.

Now

Now the matter of our Faith, is the whole Word of God: As it is with the Bee in gathering Honey: as the Spider gathers Poiſon out of every Flower; ſo the Bee gathers Honey out of the ſame Flower, and out of the ſweeteſt Flower ſhe ſucks the moſt Honey. Oh the Word of God, how full of ſweet Flowers is it! There is the ſharpeſt Terrors, and the fearfulleſt Plagues too: A gracious Heart will gather Sweetneſs out of both theſe. But above all, the ſweet of the Promiſes of the Goſpel, the ſap and ſweet therein, and the Blood of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt that is communicated thereby. Oh the faithful Soul ſucks moſt there. Now that we may provide matter for our Faith, obſerve theſe Rules, which are commonly obſerved in all Proviſions.

Firſt, They provide and lay in, in ſeaſon, timely, as ſoon as they can: this is the Practice of him that would husband his Eſtate wiſely; his care is to buy at the beſt hand: So I would have a good Chriſtian to

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store up all the Promises of God, in all the good Word of God seasonably; I mean when all thy Parts and Abilites are strong, and Nature is able to fight it out; and while the fair day of God's Favour lasteth, and while the Word and Sacraments are dispensed, this the best time to lay in spiritual Provisions, that we may not want them, when we have use of them. It is a marvellous strange and preposterous course, when a Man is weak, his Eyes dim, and his Heart and Strength faileth, and even ready to give up the Ghost, then to lay in Grace and Provision of Mercy: and then for him who hath hated the Ministers, and loathed the means of Grace, and abused the Patience and Long-suffering of God: Oh then to have a Minister come to him, and have a Promise in the day of Persecution; then for a Man to bethink himself of the Promise and Comforts of the Gospel; when a Man should spend on the Promises, then to be getting of them, this is ill husbandry: The better way is this, to be buying and getting

getting in at every turn: and this is the reason why our Saviour saith, *O if thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy Peace!* While the Word, and thy Life, and the Sabbaths, and the Ordinances last; this is thy day, we know not how soon the Lord may take all from us. Oh the Estate of the poor *Palatinates*, if it be true we hear of them, they have lost all the means of Grace, and they have Idolatry now amongst them, and their Enemies force them to go to Mass against their Consciences; aud they cannot see a good Minister, nor a good Christian, but they weep to consider the times they once had: Therefore let's labour to be wise in the Lord, now while the Fair is; and consider how God deals with his Children: *Psalm* 48. 9. *We have thought of thy Name, O Lord in the midst of the Temple.* It is spoken there of the Goodness of God towards *Sion:* A cup of Poyson, and a Stone of stumbling: when he had spoken of all the Bulwarks that God had

had made, and all the Goodness and Mercy he had shewed to his People, and the Malice and Wrath of his Enemies: he saith, This God is our God, even for ever: as if he had said, The Lord did provide for his People in *Egypt*, and overthrew proud *Pharaoh* that set himself against God; and this is our God. When thou art in the Wilderness, this God is thy God; when thou art in Persecution, this God is thy God, and the God of all: thus he stores up while the Season lasts.

2. Note this, as thou must observe what God doth to others, so labour to treasure up thy own Experiences, 1 *Tim.* 4. 18. He hath delivered us, and he doth and will deliver us, saith the Apostle: and the Prophet *David* saith, *I remember thy Judgment of old.* Oh well fare a good old store: I remember, saith he, how thou didst rebuke *Amaleck*, and overthrow *Nimrod*, and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Achitophel*. Oh it's admirable to consider these things: I received Comfort, saith he; God will overthrow

throw every Enemy, and this is ſtore for thy Faith to work upon, *Pſal.* 89. 49. *Where are thy former Mercies? David* is afore-hand with God now; he is not come to buy Food juſt at the time of Famine, but it's laid up before-hand; lay in abundantly of all the Promiſes of all kinds, you had better leave than lack; and it's the Wiſdom of a Man to have ſomewhat to ſpare, and to have an over-plus afore-hand, that a Man may not live feebly and poorly, and be at his Wits end every turn, and knows not which way to ſhift for himſelf, and have no Bread in his Houſe; I mean, no proviſion of Promiſes by him: *Iſa.* 42. 23. *Who is wiſe, let him hear for after-times*; As if he had ſaid, You muſt not only lay in Promiſes for the preſent, but ſtore them for afterwards; as the Chapman ſaith, I ſhall want this at ſuch a time; and ſo the Husbandman ſaith, I ſhall have occaſion for this or that at ſuch a time, and ſo get it afore-hand. Oh that God would give us theſe Hearts! It is good, as we may ſo ſay, to keep pro-

Promises in pickle, that we may spend them at leasure. *In the days of Famine*, saith the Prophet, *thou shalt have enough.* These precious Promises will be good meat in Lent, when haply thou shalt sit under a hollow Tree, and creep among the Bushes, then three or four of these Promises will give a Man a good meal of Comfort; therefore store them up, they will do you no harm: and when you are driven from House, and Home, and Friends, and all, these will exceedingly refresh. Oh how sweetly are they scattered up and down in the Word, according to the Saints several Necessities and Occasions. Bring this precious Provision home, leave it not in the Market; it's a folly to say, I have good Provision, but it is not here. *Let the Word of God dwell plenteously in you, and richly in all Wisdom.* Observe, It must be plenty, not scant; it must dwell in you, that you may but step aside and have it; there is the matter for your Faith to work on. So also in the next place, we are to fit Faith

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for the Service, that it may ſucceed with more Comfort and better ſpeed. Though a Man be a Believer, yet there is a great deal of dulneſs and bluntneſs comes upon this Grace, though he have it: *Luke* 24.25. See how our Saviour chides his Diſciples, *Oh Fools, ſlow and dull of Heart to believe*, &c. So we ought to whet our Faith, that it may line and ſquare the Promiſes (as it is in the Hebrew) that it may pierce through the veil of all the Riches of the freeneſs of God's Grace, and ſo bring Comfort to us: It's with the hand of Faith, as it is with the hand of the Body, if it be nummed, ſtiff, or frozen, a Man muſt rub it, or warm it, befors he can hold any thing; ſo it is with the hand of Faith, for Faith is the hand of the Soul, it takes hold of that Mercy which God hath provided for us in Chriſt Jeſus. Now Faith is ſometimes numm'd and ſtiff through Careleſneſs and Looſeneſs; therefore it's not enough for a Man to have Faith, but he muſt ſupple and oyl the Sinews of Faith, that he may more

freely

freely take hold of the Promises of Life, and receive Comfort from thence; and that this may be done, we must, first maintain the evidence of Faith once gotten; with question undeniable, this Grace of Faith once gotten, is to be maintained: Mark it, I speak not of those that have not Faith; it is in vain to bid a Main live by Faith, who hath none; but it's for those in whose Hearts God hath been pleased to work this blessed Grace: This must be the care of those that have gotten Faith: he must know the nature of Faith in general, and of this Faith in particular, whether it be of that Faith which *Peter* speaks of; for there is a great deal of Copper-faith in the World: As, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners, and the like. Now when thou hast gained Evidence that thou hast Faith, then fill it up, and keep it by thee, and labour to make the Demonstration of it so plain to thy Soul, that it may be undeniable. What a great folly is it for a Man to question, when he should use

use it? The Work must needs be much hindred, though he have never so much Faith, when he begins to cavil with it, and to question whether it be good or no: It's a proverbial Speech. He that doubts of his way, misseth his way; for while he is doubting, he goes no way in conclusion: so he that questions whether he hath Faith or no, gets little good at present by it. Tell a poor Sinner of living by Faith, and he says, it's good news if he had it. 'Tis poor comfort to bid a Man go warm him when he hath no Fire; so it's poor comfort to bid a Man live by that which he never had; quarrelling and doubting when a Man hath it, hinders the use and benefit of Faith: Here is a Man that is quarrelling about it, when he should live on it. When the Disciples saw Jesus walking on the Sea, they thought it was a Spirit, but Jesus said unto them, *Be of good comfort, it is I:* Now when *Peter* knew it was Christ, being somewhat too venturous, he said, *If it be thou, Lord, bid me come unto thee*

thee on the Water; and Christ said, *Come*, and *Peter* going, the Water began to be boisterous, his Heart began to sink, *&c.* and Christ said unto him, *O thou of little Faith, why doest thou doubt?* as if he had said, it's now no time of doubting, but a time of believing: The Lord bid him come, and he had ground enough to come, and strength of Faith to come; but when he saw the Waves great and troublesom, instead of believing, he fell a questioning and quarrelling with the Promise: As it is with a foul rusty Musqet, shoot such a one off, and it will recoil. When Faith grows rusty with doubting, we sit down dismay'd and unsetled; the very questioning and quarrelling against the Work of Faith, many times doth as much disable a Man to put forth the power of Faith, as if he had no Faith at all.

Secondly; When thou hast maintained the clearness of the Work of Grace before gained, then labour to bring thy Heart to marvellous stilness and calmness from time to time.

Stayed-

Stayedneſs and ſtilneſs of the Soul, frames the Heart to hold the Shield ſteadily, and bear off the Blow comfortably when it comes; thoſe boiſtrous Affections, thoſe Crowds and Troops of troubleſom Imaginations, as Fear and Jealouſie; theſe unrank the frame of the Soul, that it is not at the command of Faith; as it is in an Army, when Ranks and Files are broken, they are at a rout, be the Commander never ſo skilful, he cannot in that Condition march on: So though we had never ſo victorious a Faith, yet if the Soul were hurled up and down with thoſe boiſtrous Diſtempers, the Soul could not command Faith. When it was told the Diſciples, *Luke* 24. 41. that Chriſt was riſen from the dead, and had manifeſted himſelf to them; the Text ſaith, *They believed not, and wondered*: they would not believe for a while, and it was through the Violence of their Joy; which made them they had no leiſure to believe. As it's true of moderate Affection, ſo it's true of ſtrong Fear, and Care and Diſtempers,

ſtempers becauſe theſe hurry the Soul violently, and tranſport it ſo, that he cannot believe: as it is in a Road, the Traveller is fitted to go his Journey, but he is hindred becauſe the Crowd is ſo great and ſtrong, that they croſs him, and oppoſe him, and are ready to carry him another way againſt his Will; juſt ſo it is with a Soul thus troubled with tumultuous Thoughts, eſpecially melancholy, and thoſe other Enemies of the Soul, as vain Imaginations, ſinful Fears, ſinful Sorrow, diſtempertd Thoughts and Cares; that though the Heart is willing and able to believe, yet thoſe ſtirrings of boiſterous Affections, they croſs Faith in the way, and bear it down. There *David* chides his Heart in *Pſalm* 43. 5. even rocks it aſleep, and would bring it quiet, ſaying, *Why art thou ſo diſquieted, O my Soul, why art thou diſquieted within me?* There are things fit our purpoſe in this Text.

1. That a tumultuous Diſtemper of Heart makes a Man lie flat upon his back, and ſink into a Swound.

2. It

2. It hinders the work of Faith. Mark what follows: *Still truſt in God.* As if he had ſaid, Leave thoſe Diſtempers of Heart, and reſt upon the freeneſs of God's Grace.

3. *David* yet looks up to God for Mercy: *For he is yet my God.* The virtue of this Rule we find by Experience, eſpecially in melancholy Perſons, when they have ſwarms of Thoughts buzzing in their Minds; ſometimes reſtleſs Fears, that do chaſe their Hearts, as the Hound does the Deer in the Foreſt; and after this comes another Affection, and after that another; and ſo at laſt they come all together: Sometimes the horror of a Man's Conſcience makes Hue and Cry after him, and makes him ſay, Oh how my Heart ſmites me! methought I ſaw Hell gaping for me, and the Devil even ſtanding at my Elbow, ready to carry me down to everlaſting Deſtruction: this makes his Soul to have ſuch an amazement and gaſtlineſs of Spirit, that he cannot reach the Promiſe of God. Well, take the Lord's advice

by the Prophet: *Fear not*, but *stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord*: that is, lay aside those restless Imaginations, and those crowds of foolish Conceits; stand still, and be quiet, and with the Eye of Faith behold the Salvation of God.

A third Rule how Faith may be fitted for the Work: take notice of this. In the want of any Means, do not *first* seek for them; and in the presence of any Means God affords, look not *first* to them for Succour and Supply, but *first* go to the Promise, that it may supply what you need, and that the Promise may bless what Means you have. It is an uncomfortable and disorderly course, for a Man barely and firstly to look at those things which are within the compass of Sense, and so range up and down in the use of the Means, when the Promise and Christ are the last thought of in our Hearts. As for instance: In a time of Poverty, how doth the Soul unfit it self for the Promise? When a Man sees his Estate low, and he is like to come to Misery,

ſery, he ſaith, I have ſome good Friends that will not ſee me want, I have ſo much Means left yet, and I have my Health and Strength, and I hope to get a poor living. Not one word all this while of a Promiſe: But what ſay you to this? If Death take away all thy Friends, Sickneſs take away thy Health and Strength, Fire or Thieves take away all thy Goods, whither wilt thou now go? When then at a dead lift, as we commonly ſay, he is fain to go to that Mercy which *endureth for ever.* Oh friend, are you there now? Why came you not thither at firſt? Well, ſince thou art come, reaſon thus: I am like to be poor, and my Friends may dye, and Thieves may rob me of all my Goods, but the Mercy of the Lord endureth for ever. So a Miniſter that is faithful, deſires to preach fruitfully, and to the benefit of the Congregation; and then we catch at the helps that are near at hand, and we go to our Books and Studies, our Wits and Pains, and think theſe will do the deed. We do well

in all this; but the fault is in the order of doing them. Haply God knocks off Man's Wheels, and a Man is not able to come to the bottom of the point; and if he be able to compass the truth in some measure, yet God blasts all he doth, and there is no good comes to the Souls of his People; at last he is fain to go to the Promise; and then the poor Minister saith, Lord, thou hast said thou wilt be with thy faithful Ministers *to the end of the World:* Little Strength there is in us; but be thou with us, Lord: now the Work goes on again. The Tradesman is honest and painful, and he hopes to compass a good Estate by his Calling, his Stock is good and great, and his Skill is sufficient, and his Penyworth shall be as reasonable as any others, and his Acquaintance are many: Then God blasts all these, and then he comes to the Promise, as in *Psal.* 1. 3. *Whatsoever the Righteous doth, it shall prosper.* Hold here now, and say, I expect all from the Promise, Mercy and Succour from the Promise.

miſe. This was the courſe that *Jacob* took, *Gen.* 32. 9. firſt he wreſtled with God and overcame him; then he wreſtled with his Brother *Eſau*, and ſaith, *O God of my Father* Abraham, *and God of my Father* Iſaac, which ſaidſt unto me, *Return into thine own Country, and I will do thee good; I am not worthy the leaſt of all thy Mercies: Lord, deliver me from the hand of my Brother* Eſau, *for I fear him.* Thus he wreſtled with the Lord by virtue of a Promiſe, overcame him, and then overcame his Brother *Eſau*, Heb. 13. 4, 5. *Marriage is honourable among all Men, and the Bed undefiled: but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judg.* But how will you have help againſt this Covetouſneſs? A Man would have ſaid thus: You have got a good Portion, and but little charge, and many Friends: but this courſe God takes: for he ſaith, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.* And thus when I have chaſed away Doubting, then Faith is ready, and the Shield is ſcoured

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Now for the ordering of Faith in the Work, there are two things to be attended to.

1. How the Soul ſhould get to the Promiſes.

2. How the Soul ſhould take, receive and improve this Sufficiency and Excellency that is in God.

1. How the Soul ſhould get to the Promiſe: You ſee all is ready, the way open, and Faith is fitted, There are three Rules to be obſerved, how the Soul may get to the Promiſe.

1. Throw off all Power and Ability in thy ſelf. *Neverthelefs*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me:* It is not I that live by any power of my ſelf, but Chriſt liveth in me. It was Chriſt's quickning, reviving, and enabling, though he had Faith. *I know*, ſaith the Prophet, *Jer.* 10. 23. *that the way of Man is not in himſelf, neither is it in Man to direct his own Steps.* So do thou ſay, if ever thou wouldſt have thy Heart fitted to go to the Promiſe, Say, It is not here, Lord, it is not in this vain Mind, it is not in the Pow-

er

er of this dead Heart, or any Paſſage that ever I received, whereby I am able to believe in thee. I mean the Principle of Life is not here, the root of Faith is in the Promiſe, and from thence it comes into the Soul. As it is with a Mariner, when the Ship is upon the Ground in the Ebb and low Water, he doth not expect to tug his Ship to the Shore by any power of himſelf: So, It is not in my Wiſdom that can direct me, and it is not in my Weapon that can defend; it is not this Humility that can bring my Soul down: It is not here, it is not I, Lord, that can reſt, or go to a Promiſe; even all our Abilities are at a low ebb: All that we are, or can do, is to empty our ſelves and fit our ſelves, and get up the main Maſt; that is, let the Soul be ready for a Promiſe, and by virtue of that be carried Heaven-ward, and Chriſt-ward. Take notice of this in your own Souls, that the Heart would begin at home: If a Temptation come, the Heart of it ſelf would overcome it; and if a Duty to be done, the Heart

of it ſelf would perform it: and if oppoſition come, the Heart of it ſelf would reſiſt it. O remember that a Man offers an Injury againſt Reaſon, Senſe, and Religion, and all. Now thy Faith begins to wreſtle with him and his dealing; and Conſcience checks, and thou wilt tear thy own Heart out of thine own Boſom. Brethren, this will not do it: when a Ship of an hundred Tun is upon Ground, the Mariners may pull and tug their Hearts out, ere they make her go. Oh go then and ſay, It is not I that can be patient, and put up a Wrong, be quiet, expect it not from hence. Let the Heart lie ſtill, till the Wind and Tyde, and Promiſe come, and that will carry thee.

The Second Rule. Bring the Promiſe home to thy Heart, that the Promiſe may bring thy Heart to it. And thus I would have you reaſon: The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by the power of his Spirit, is in the Promiſe undeniably, and undoubtedly, and unſpeakably accompanying in his manner, as he ſhall ſee fit. This I ſay,

ſay, That the Almighty Power of Chriſt doth really and continually accompany the Promiſe for the good of his: Hence it is called, *The Spirit of Promiſe*; for there is an Almighty creating Work goes along with the Promiſe. And I reaſon thus: That Word that diſcerns the Thoughts of the Hearts of Men, that Word muſt needs have the Almighty Work of God's Spirit accompanying of it: ſo far as God hath promiſed it, not when thou haply think'ſt it fit, but when God ſees it fit. He doth it as a voluntary Workman, therefore thou conſidereſt that there is an Almighty Power, and a Fulneſs in the Promiſe. Then lay that Promiſe upon thy own Heart, and conclude it, and look for Virtue from thence, to draw thy Soul to it again.

I have ſeveral Paſſages to expreſs this more fully. *Jacob* would not belive that *Joſeph* was alive, or if he were alive, he had but little Means, and was poor, *Gen.* 45. 26, 27, 28, 29. *But when he ſaw the Chariots that* Joſeph *had ſent him, then*

he believed and said, I have enough; Joseph *my Son liveth.* The Chariots sent from *Joseph* to *Jacob*, brought *Jacob* to *Joseph.* So every believing Soul is poor and feeble, and disabled to go to God, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ: therefore look thou unto the Chariots of *Israel* first, and that will convey thee to the Promise: As it is with the Miller, first he pares the Mill fitly, and orders all the occasions thereof, and when the Stones are fit, and laid to go, yet it will not, till the fluce be pulled up, and the Water run that drives the Mill: So the Soul is humbled, and lies level with the Lord and his Truth, and is content to yield to his Conditions; but now the Soul of it self, in it self cannot go, it hath not the principle of going; but let down the Sluce of the Promise, and let that come to thy Heart, and it will bring thy Soul home to the Lord; as *Luke 19.9. This day Salvation is come to thy House:* Not to the Walls of thy House, but to Men that are in thy House. They did not come to Salvation, but Salva-

Salvation came to them. The Lord ſent Salvation to ſalute the Houſe of little *Zacheus.*

The third Rule. When the Promiſe is thus come home to thee, and thou ſeeſt the Sufficiency and Authority of it, then all thou haſt to do is this; In the ſtream of that Promiſe, be carried home to the Promiſe. The Prodigal, *Luke* 15. is ſaid to be like a *loſt Sheep.* (Mark this, for it concerns you, poor Creatures.) The poor Sheep is wandering up and down, now in the Mouth of the Lyon, and then in the Briars, and ſometimes in the Pit. The Text ſaith, *He leaveth ninety nine to ſeek that*; That is, in compariſon of what care he expreſſeth to the loſt Sheep; he leaveth a Man regenerate not carelesly, but he will not expreſs ſo great Love as to poor loſt Man; And tho thou canſt not find the way to Heaven, yet he will find it thee; lie thou upon the Shoulders of Chriſt. When thou findeſt thy Heart feeble and weak, and thy ſelf unable to believe, then the Lord Jeſus Chriſt brings the

Spirit

Spirit of Grace, and that comes to ſeek, and Jeſus Chriſt lays that Soul of thine upon his Shoulders, that is, upon the Riches of the freeneſs of his Grace: Therefore let thy Heart be tranſported by the power of that Grace, and by the virtue of that Mercy that God hath made known to thee for thy everlaſting good. When the Chariots are come, get up into them. The Lord Jeſus Chriſt is gone up to Heaven, and hath ſent theſe Chariots for thee; therefore get thee up, and ſay, Lord, take me up with thee. When the Mariner hath Sea-room enough, he cares for no Man, if he can but obſerve the Channel; he looks not ſo much at his Oar, or any thing, ſo that he can but obſerve the Channel. This Channel is the full Tide of Promiſe; therefore lay thy ſelf upon the Promiſe, and ſay, Lord, in the virtue of that Grace, and in the power of that Spirit, carry me; and in the Riches of that Mercy of thine, Lord convey the Heart of this poor Sinner, and make me happy with thy ſelf for ever.

Again,

Again; Never let a quick Stock lie dead by you; it's monſtrous ill husbandry not to be trading with a quick Stock. As it is in the World with Temporals, even ſo it is in our Spiritual Eſtate. Though a Man have little for the preſent, yet if he have ſome old Reverſions to come, it will refreſh his Heart, and bear him up in time of Poverty and Miſery; and he ſaith, If he can make but a ſcrambling ſhift for a while, for ſo long time, then he hopes to live as well as any Man in the Country: So there is ſome of the Promiſes we have in Poſſeſſion. Oh, but there is the Reverſion of old Promiſes, old Rents. As old Rents of Farms that were let long ago, when the Leaſes come out, they are worth treble the Rent they were lett for at the firſt: ſo there are old Rents of Comfort and Mercy; as, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.* Then no more Tears, no more Trouble, no more Sorrow, no more Sin. Oh get thoſe into your hands, and have them in uſe, and ſay, The day will come when

when we shall have Happiness and Joy beyond all that the Tongue of Man can express, or the Heart conceive. Though we are buffeted with many Temptations, and wearied with a world of Corruptions, yet we shall be saved, saith Faith. Thus a Man may make a pretty good shift to live upon these terms, though we have nothing else to live upon in the World. Remember what I speak now, and labour to fasten this Truth upon thy Heart, That there is not only present good in thy self, but in another, and reserved by another for thy Comfort, and be thou content it should be so; not only to look what thou hast, but consider that the greatest part of thy Glory, is in the Glory of Christ; and the greatest part of thy Wisdom, is in the Wisdom of Christ; and the greatest part of thy Liberty, in the Liberty of a Christ; and thy Riches, in the Riches of a Christ. And know, whatever is in Christ thou hast it all as thine, *John* 3. 12. *Behold what Love the Father hath shewed to us, that we are*

now

now *the Sons of God!* I tell you, Brethren, this is a marvellous Priviledge, and if you had no more but this, you had a Child's Portion; but it appears not what we shall have, we have but a glimpse now: what think you will the Harvest be? Now we have but the sips of it, what shall then the full Cups be, when *we shall see Christ as he is?* Thus did *Moses* improve his Estate, *Heb.* 11. 26. He bore all Afflictions comfortably; yea, *He esteemed the Rebukes of Christ as greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt*; Why, *because he had an Eye to the Recompence of the Reward.* We account not of a Man's Estate for what he hath in present Possession; but what is like to befal him, and what he is born unto. What *Moses* did, do thou: Remember thou hast a good Stock upon the Ground, which will pay all thy Debt, and yet live like a Man too. Though thou hast many Corruptions, many Disgraces cast upon thee; though thou hast little Strength, and art at a great loss in point of Comfort; yet there is

enough

enough in Heaven, enough in Christ, both of Riches and Comfort. Let thy Soul then be careful to make all these present with thee for thine own good.

But some will say, How may a Man expect that from the Promise, which God intends, and will undoubtedly bestow?

For answer hereunto, I will shew what thou may'st expect, and what God will undoubtedly bestow. If thou dost believe, Heaven and Salvation are certainly thine, and Perseverance to the end, and that manner and measure of Assistance, that may make thee fit for Perseverance: These three things grow here. But for Temporal Blessings which we desire, and that measure of Spiritual Blessings which we must have; so much Grace, and so much Assistance, and so much Abilities to do Duties; God doth not engage himself to bestow these. But that which God engageth himself to bestow, both for Temporal and Spiritual Blessings, it may be discovered in these three

three Particulars. So much Grace and Aſſurance of God's Love, and ſo much comfort in Grace as he ſees fit for thee, after his own order, and in his own time. I will open them all, becauſe many do here bungle wonderfully.

Firſt; He will beſtow them in his own order, not thy order. Firſt, He will make thee fit. and make thee good, that thou may'ſt be able to digeſt them, and then he will beſtow them on thee. Haply a poor Man is driven to deſperate hazard, and is brought miſerably under, and therefore the Heart cries earneſtly for ſome more ſupply; and he calls, and God anſwers not; and he labours to look up to the Promiſe, where God ſaith, *Nothing ſhall be wanting to him*, and yet it cometh not. I ſay, God will give theſe in his own order. Firſt, God will make thee fit for this Eſtate, and then give it. I never knew a good Man deſperately poor, but his Heart was deſperately proud; therefore the Lord will make him good, and make his proud Heart yield, and then

beſtow

bestow these things: Look for that first; and then for the other.

Again, Another Christian labours exceedingly for the assurance of God's Love and cannot obtain it; and seeks to God in the use of the Promises, and yet he cannot find it setled. Well, God will give thee Comfort and Consolation, but in his own time. And know this, that commonly the Lord never debars the Soul of Comfort, but he sees the Heart is not fit for it. Thy Heart would be proud and careless, and God would hear no more of thee, and thy Sail would overturn the Boat; therefore when God hath abased thy Heart, and made thee content to want what he shall deny, then he will give thee assurance, but it must be in his order. And this is the reason why the most smoak out their days in Discontent; the reason is, There is a proud Heart and a sturdy Disposition of Spirit that will not come unto God's terms. As it is with a Physician; he will not give a Cordial to his Patient, when he will: for if he were in a burning Fever,

Fever, it were the next way to ſend him going; but firſt he purges him, and makes him fit, and then gives him a Cordial: So it is in theſe things which thou craveſt, the Lord will give thee them, when thou ſhalt not ſurfeit of Comfort, and Aſſurance, and Proſperity; and when thy Heart is emptied and purged, and able to digeſt theſe things, then the Lord will give them.

Secondly; The Lord will give us Temporal Bleſſings, and that meaſure of Spiritual, in his own due time; not when thou and I would, but when he ſees moſt fit; as *John* 2. 3, 4. The Mother of Jeſus comes to our Saviour, and ſaith, *They have no Wine.* She thought ſhe had Chriſt at command: but he anſwers her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine Hour is not yet come.* So it is with our Souls; we want Comfort, and we want Strength againſt our Corruptions, and Aſſurance, and Aſſiſtance: But what have I to do with that proud Heart, ſays our Saviour? *my* time *is not yet come.* You would have

have it now, as they said, *Wilt thou now restore the Kingdom to* Israel? God will do in his own time, and we must wait his leisure. This is one thing that doth necessarily accompany the Covenant of Grace, as I have shewed before. That the Lord should dispense of his Kiugdom when he pleaseth, and not when we will. When the Lord sees these Blessings of Spiritual Mercies and Temporal Favours are ripe, and most seasonable to thy necessity; then thou shalt have them: but the time is in God's Hand.

Thirdly; The Lord doth not promise in such a manner and measure, and such a peculiar thing, to give that Temporal Blessing, and that Spiritual Assistance we desire; but the Lord will do that which he knows most fit: for so the Text says, *Feed me with Food convenient for me.* There was Faith now; he wholly refers himself to God. When a Man comes to the Taylor to have a Garment made, he doth not cut out the Garment himself, but refers it to the Judgment

ment of the Workman. So muſt we do, refer our ſelves to God, and know, God promiſeth nothing, but as he ſees it fit for thy good. It may be thou ſhalt not have this Bleſſing, or that Grace. As it is with a Potter, he is minded to make ſo many Veſſels of Honour: ſo if the Lord will make thee a Veſſel of Honour, go away contented; whether thou haſt ſo much Proſperity, and ſo much Good, or no, and ſo much Grace, it skills not; it is enough that thou art elected to eternal Happineſs.

Now you ſee how to manage and improve the Promiſe aright for you beſt Advantage, and to expect that from the Promiſe which it will yield.

Again, Another Particular in this third Rule of living by Faith, is this: How to take, and how to enjoy the ſap and ſweet of the Promiſe, and to live by it. When the Husbandman hath ſown his Ground, and his Fruit is ripe, and he hath reaped it, then he muſt gather in his Corn that he may live upon it. So let us

gather

gather in the Promises when we see the best Advantage; now let us take the Gain, and live by it, and that comfortably too, in the proof of God's Goodness therein. For this end, let me suggest these five Directions.

First, Thou seest what God is in the Promise: and thou expectest no more than God is there. Then, eye that particular good in the Promise which thou standest in need of; eye that good in Christ, and in the Promise, and then set God's Power and Faithfulness a-work to bring that Good, and his Wisdom to continue it. As for instance: I am in Persecution, and either I would have Deliverance and Safety, that I might not be imprisoned, or else Comfort and Refreshment, if the Lord carry me thither; and therefore I would see all this in the Promise, still reserving the Conditions before mentioned. If thou art in Prison, eye Liberty and Preservation in Christ, he that is the great Deliverer of his People, and carrieth his People in his own hands: And then set God's Power and

and Faithfulneſs a-work, that can do it; and his Wiſdom, that can continue it for thy good. That which thou ſeeſt and needeſt in the Promiſe, that the Power and Wiſdom of God may communicate to thy Soul. This is the meaning of that place, *Pſalm* 37. 5. *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Root thy ſelf, and lay all thy occaſions upon the Lord: Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *Caſt your Care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.* It is God's proper Office and Work: he careth for thy Soul, therefore lay it all upon him, and put over all thy Care into his Hands, and ſet his Power and Faithfulneſs a-work; only this is here a little to be ſcanned. I ſpeak not this, that we ſhould take no care at all, but I ſay, Hang all the weight and burden upon the Lord. The Brewer he tumbles the Barrel of Beer, and he rouls it, but it's the Earth that bears it: So whatever Trouble is in thine Eye, or Ear, or Heart, roul it upon the Lord. That is thus: The weight of

of a Man lies eſpecially in three things, which a Man muſt hurl off himſelf, and lay upon the Lord. Either a Man ſhall not be able to know what he ſhall do, or what he is commanded: Or elſe, Secondly, He ſhall not be able to do what God commands, and he knows: Or elſe, Thirdly, He ſhall not find ſucceſs in what he doth. It is not a trouble to do what we can, or to employ our ſelves as we are able: but this is the trouble, when the Heart ſaith, I know not what the Mind of God is; or, I ſhall not do what I know; or, it will not ſucceed: or, No, it is not in my power. Now leave all theſe with God, and meddle not with them, but put them over to the Lord, and meddle with thine own Duty, and with thine own Work; and let God alone with his: and ſay thou unto the Lord, In truth, Lord, it is not in my power, it is not in my parts or work, either to compaſs that Wiſdom, that is able to direct my ſelf, or to have any power to do all that is commanded, much

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leſs to give good ſucceſs. Lord, I will not meddle with that, but leave it to thy Majeſty: if thou in thy Power canſt not, nor in thy Faithfulneſs and Goodneſs careſt not for thy poor helpleſs Creature, then I am content: and if thou wilt not be faithful, then I am content to be miſerble.

And ſo alſo thou mayeſt ſuppoſe a Man that hath promiſed to undertake ſome Buſineſs for a Friend, and in the end it proves ſomewhat troubleſom, and therefore he wiſhes his Friend to take it again into his own hands; for it is very troubleſom: But a Man will leave it to him, and ſay, He hath engaged himſelf to do it, and he will not look after it; I will not meddle with it any more. So what end it is that is in God's Royal Prerogative, leave it with God, and do not meddle with it, Let God now look to it; leave it to his Faithfulneſs, and Power to accompliſh it: ſo did *Abraham*, Rom. 14. 18, 19, 20. *Abraham above Hope believed under Hope, that he ſhould be the Father of*

many Nations. *Sarah's* Womb was barren, and his Body dead, and yet he must have a Son: And therefore he set God's Power a-work, and faith, *ver.* 21. Lord, this Body is dead, and *Sarah* is barren: there is no help here: but thou art able, and thou hast engaged thy self to do it. You see he sets God's Power to work, and puts over all the weight and burthen of the Care upon the Lord. And therefore says *Mordecai*, *Esther* 4. 14. If *thou hold they Peace at this time, Comfort and Deliverance shall come from some other place.* He was resolved that God had Deliverance for his Church, and would not deny his Truth. *Salvation will come*, saith the Text. He knows not the place or the means: but he knows *Salvation will come.* So set thou God's Power and Faithfulness to work, and not thy own Care: Commit it to the Lord, and cast thy Care upon him, so far as concerns the burthen of it. This is the first Direction.

Secondly, By Faith go to the Promise again for Help and Power to wait

wait on God in that way, and to look towards God in the uſe of thoſe means that he hath appointed for the attaining of that Good which his Power will work for thee: God will certainly work it: And ſo thou muſt meet God in the courſe of his Providence, in the improvement of the Means he hath appointed for thy good. Obſerve thou this Providence, and do thou what God requires: for otherwiſe we live not by Faith, but tempt God, and throw away the Promiſe and all, and deprive our ſelves of that good which God would beſtow; we not walking in that way which he hath appointed. *Luke* 24. 49. when our Saviour was to go to Heaven, he ſaid, *Behold I ſend the Promiſe of my Father amongſt you: but tarry you in the City of* Jeruſalem, *until you be indued with Power from above.* Chriſt would indue them with the Spirit; but they muſt tarry at *Jeruſalem* and wait for it. So I ſay, Would'ſt thou have Grace and the Spirit from above, and the Wealth of the World? then walk

in that way God hath appointed: ſtay at *Jeruſalem*, and be in the way, and meet God in his Providence, and then thou ſhalt receive from his Power and Faithfulneſs what thou needeſt. Thou wouldſt have God bleſs thee in thine Eſtate, and yet thou wouldſt be idle and careleſs: but this will not do the deed: God would give thee a Bleſſing, but thou art not there to take it. This is the Excellency of the Promiſes of God; as they require Conditions before they beſtow Mercies; ſo they make us able to be partakers of the Conditions, and give the Conditions: As for Example, *Ezek.* 36. the Lord in the former part of the Chapter promiſeth to give them many things; but how? It muſt be by Prayer, and humbling themſelves before him: he will give thee a Family-Bleſſing, by Prayer in it; and a Bleſſing in private, by Prayer in private; and Strength againſt Sin, and Power againſt Corruption: But I will be ſought unto for all theſe, ſaith the Lord: and the Text ſaith, *Bleſſed is*

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the Man that walketh in his Integrity, and his Children after him. Therefore walk thou in the Integrity of thine Heart; that's the Condition of a Chriſtian in general; or as a Husband, or as a Wife, or as a Servant, in the particular. This the Promiſe requires. But mark this now: The ſame Promiſe that requireth the Conditions, will help us to perform the Conditions: and the ſame Lord that ſaith, *I will be entreated and ſought to for all theſe*; the ſame Lord ſaith, *Pſal.* 10. 17. *He prepareth their Hearts to pray.* Go thou therefore to God to help thee to pray, that he may beſtow his Bleſſing upon thee, which he hath promiſed, *Ezek.* 26. 27. He will firſt give them *a new Heart*, then *teach them to walk in his ways*. So if thou wilt walk in his ways, thou ſhalt have his Bleſſings: therefore go thou by the power of Faith, to the Promiſes of God, for Strength and Grace, and in that thou muſt uſe the Means appointed, and then expect a Bleſſing from it in the Courſe of his Providence. Now is God's Power und

Faithfulness set a-work.

The third Direction. We must set it down, and conclude it, that God will do it; so shall we receive in the ways of his Providence whatsoever he hath promised to give. That is the Work of Faith, and that is to draw Sap and Virtue from the Promise, *John* 3.33. There by sealing, is meant sealing to the Promise. This is the nature of sealing; when a Man hath drawn the Articles of Agreement, and when they have sealed, the whole matter is done. So Faith must make the Promise authentical, and put a Seal to it that it is true, and saith, It is done in Heaven, and I am fully resolved, and setledly perswaded thereof, that I shall have whatever I have believed, and thou hast promised, and I have used means in the ways of thy Providence. Famous is that of *Abraham*, *Gen.*22.5. The Lord hath bidden him sacrifice his Son, and yet had said before he should live: and therefore when he came to the place, he said to his Servants, *Abide you here with the Asses*;

Aſſes; for I and the Child will go yonder and ſacrifice, and return again to you. He thought to ſacrifice him, and yet by Faith be believed that he ſhould bring *Iſaac* again. So I would have a poor Saint of God believe and conclude. When thou findeſt thy Comforts like *Iſaac*'s in the Aſhes, and thy Eſtate helpleſs and hopeleſs, yet even then ſet God's Power a-work, and wait upon him in the uſe of the means that he hath appointed, and there conclude it, and bring Patience, Power, and Deliverance, and ſo in every kind, according to all thy Neceſſities. Yet remember this, Expect no more from the Promiſe, than God will give in the Promiſe: but ſay, My ſins ſhall be maſtered one day, and theſe Temptations ſhall one day be overthrown, that have ſo long annoyed the Soul of thy Servant: I have begg'd Succour againſt theſe Corruptions within, and theſe Temptations without, and yet it is not; but I know it's done in Heaven; it wants nothing but the taking out; thou wilt beſtow upon

thy Servant what thou seest fit, 1 *Sam.* 1. 18. *Hannah* wept sore, and prayed to the Lord, and went away, and was no more sorrowful: and she said, Lord, I believe that I shall either have a Child, or that which is as good, or better: now the Business was done. But imagine the Lord delays, and does not suddenly accomplish what he intends, and thou hast used means to receive; he gives not, grants not, nor sends not Succour according to thy desire, and the tenure of the Covenant, as thou conceivest.

Then in the fourth place, Faith is to take up its stand, and stay till it come: as thou resolvest so it will be: stay till it be, and stay it out. Here is much Work to do. We prevent God's Kindness, when we go away before he be willing to bestow a Kindness on us. But Faith will not do so: he that believes, does not make haste: he makes haste to obey, but he stays, and resolves that it will be. *The Vision is for an appointed time*, therefore wait for it. Thou art

are peſtered with thy Sins, and haſt laboured by Faith to ſubdue them; and thy Eſtate is low, and thou haſt laboured by Faith for Deliverance: and yet it comes not: therefore ſtay till God ſees fit, and it will come, *Pſal.* 123. 2. *As the Eyes of a Servant look to the hands of his Maſters, and the Eyes of a Maiden to her Miſtreſs: ſo our Eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have Mercy upon us.* It is not, Till I will, or till I ſee fit, or according to my Mind: but until the Lord have Mercy. We ſuddenly ſlide away from the Covenant which the Lord makes with us: becauſe we have it not when we will, therefore we go away, 1 *Sam.* 13. 13. When *Samuel* tarried long, and the People began to murmur, *Saul* went and offered a Burnt-offering to the Lord: and therefore *Samuel* ſaid unto him, *Thou haſt done fooliſhly, and haſt not kept the Commandments of thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have eſtabliſhed the Kingdom upon* Iſrael *for ever.* If *Saul* had ſtayed the Lord's time, he would

have established the Kingdom upon *Israel* for ever: but he prevented the Lord's Kindness, and offered Sacrifice unseasonably and sinfully. So it is many times with a proud, pettish, rash and distempered Heart: if we have not what we would, and when we would, then we are all amort, and murmur, and say, Why should we wait any longer? Thou hast done foolishly. Hast thou prayed and looked to the Promise thus long, and wilt thou now give over? The Lord would have comforted thee, hadst thou gone on: but the Lord hath withdrawn himself from thee, because thou hast withdrawn thy Heart from the Promise. When the Carriage is heavy, and the Way dead, there many sore pulls, and oft the Waggon is at a stand; and if a Man should then go away and give over, all his Work were lost. Therefore stay thou till the Lord shew Mercy. Thus long thou hast call'd, and sought, and lookt up to the Promise, and waited upon the Lord, and attended upon the freeness of his Grace, once more haply

haply would have done it: thy Heart was almoſt humbled, thy Sin was almoſt conquered: Oh thou ſilly Soul, why didſt not thou hold it out? It would have come at the laſt, my life for thine. Now take heed of this; if the time ſeem tedious, and thy Heart begins to ſink, and thy Spirit is weary; take heed of flying off, take heed of ſhifting for thy own Comfort, and looking to baſe Ends and Aims: no, hold thy Mind to, and keep thy Eye of Faith upon the Promiſe, and ſtay it out till God ſee the time fit: and know, it's the beſt time, when it's God's time. In the 17*th* of the *Acts*, ver. 31. *Paul* ſays, *Except theſe abide in the Ship, theſe cannot be ſafe.* Every Man was skipping over-board to ſave himſelf: but *Paul* ſtayed them. A Man would have thought otherwiſe; but the Apoſtle knew it was not ſo; for the Lord had revealed it to him. So I ſay, Be thy Temptations never ſo ſtrong, and thy Sins never ſo many, and thou beginneſt to complain, and ſayeſt, I have cryed, Lord, and fought earneſt--

earnestly, and yet my Condition is worse, and my Soul more sinful, and I am less able to help my self, there is no more Succour to be expected. Now take heed of going out of the Ship, and from the use of Means: keep in the Ship; for in it you shall be safe. Keep in the Promise, and still your Hearts there: you shall have a happy arrival at Heaven, though it be upon a little broken board: it's no matter, stay God's time.

The fifth Direction. Yet haply the Lord seems sometimes not only to delay his poor Servants, and to with-hold his Favour; but he seems to frown and say he will not hear; and he seems to be angry with the Prayer of his Servants, and with their Importunity; and he seems as if he would not succour and supply. Thus he dealt with *Jacob*, *Gen.*32.26. there the Lord says, *Let me go*; I care not what becomes of thee, *Let me go*. But *Jacob* lays hold upon him, and would not let him go. So the last work of Faith is this. In a holy Humility labour to contend with God, and by

by ſtrong hand overcome the Lord; for the Lord loves to be overcome thus. Be not ſaucy with the Lord; and in the ſenſe of thine own Baſeneſs, as it were, catch the Lord Jeſus, and ſtrive with him; leave not till thou haſt thoſe Comforts he hath promiſed, and thou haſt begged. This is the Glory and Victory of the Triumph of Faith, that gives thee the day too, and lays down the Weapons, and yields himſelf conquered: As it was with *Jacob*, when God ſaw he could not prevail, he ſaid, *verſ.* 28. *Thy Name ſhall no more be called* Jacob, *but* Iſrael, *becauſe thou haſt prevailed with God.* God is ready to give what he hath promiſed: but he will have us try the maſtery with him. God overcomes himſelf, and we by Faith in God overcome God: as *James* 2. 13. *Mercy triumphs over Juſtice.* Lord, ſaith my Soul, Why ſhould not I have that Mercy, Supply and Succour? Saith Juſtice, Thou art a ſinful Wretch, and thou haſt wronged me. Saith Anger, Thou haſt deſerved to be plagued: and there-

therefore thou ſhalt feel the ſmart of my Diſpleaſure. Now Faith lays hold upon the Riches of the freeneſs of God's Mercy in Chriſt, and in him Juſtice is ſatisfied, and Anger appeaſed for all; and now Mercy is purchaſed for all, and Mercy triumpheth over Juſtice, and Faith takes hold upon and overcomes God himſelf, as I may ſay, with a holy humble baſeneſs of Heart. You know what the Lord did to the Woman of *Canaan*: when ſhe had ſtriven with him a great while, and would take no denial; at laſt he ſaith, *O Woman, great is thy Faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt.* Take what thou wilt, if thou wilt have Life for thy Child, and Peace for thine own Conſcience, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, take it; for it is all thine. He, as it were, turns her looſe to all his Treaſury. If ſhe had gone away at the firſt or ſecond denial, ſhe had found no Help: but becauſe ſhe held out, ſhe had all her Hearts deſire. God would have us wreſtle with his Majeſty, that he may be overcome in Mercy and Good-

Goodneſs. I might have here taken ſome of the moſt deſperate caſes that could be, that you might have ſeen what Faith would have done in the midſt of the want of all Means, and in the greateſt Extremity that could have befaln a poor Sinner; but I paſs over that at this time. Now therefore conſider what hath been ſaid: lay theſe things up, and have them ever before you, and practiſe them: and by often writing, learn to write: and do often living, learn to live. Many People live poorly, and make a poor ſhift to go to Heaven: but I would not have a Chriſtian live ſo, but be Maſter of his Art. Know and ſee your way, and uſe the means. Labour to get good thereby, that you may have ſap, and the ſweet of the Promiſes, and ſo go ſinging, and rejoycing and triumphing up to Heaven. Now that which I conclude withal, is this: You ſee how far the Lord hath brought us, how the Soul hath been prepared, and cut off from Sin and himſelf, if fitted for the Lord Jeſus by Contrition and Humiliation,

no, and that the Soul comes to ſee that there is no hope in the Creatures, nor any ſuccour in Heaven, but in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo at laſt the Sinner comes, and lies at the foot of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and knows that either he muſt be another Man, or a damned Man. Now when he ſees that Prayer and all other means will not profit, and the Power of the Means yet prevails not, and the Power of his Corruptions is not yet maſtered: then he looks up to Chriſt, and is contented that he ſhould do what he will with him. Now when the Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſees him lie wearied thus with his Corruptions, then the Lord gives ſpecial notice to his Soul, that it is his purpoſe to do him good, and that there is Mercy for that broken Heart of his. With that, Hope is ſtirred and Faith, Is it poſſible? is it credible? Shall this Wretchedneſs of mine be pardoned? Oh my deſire is kindled within me, and I long for that day. Oh that I might once ſee the Funeral of all my Sins! Mark now, how Love and Joy are cheared

to

to entertain this Mercy; and ſaith, Oh how is the Soul bound and engaged to God, that offers free and undeſerved Grace to a ſtubborn and rebellious Sinner! At laſt the Will ſaith *Amen* to the Promiſe, and further ſaith, O that Mercy I will have! And thus the Soul is come home to God, by Vocation. Now the Prodigal is come home to his Father, and the Father's Heart leaps within his Breaſt, when he ſees him lie at the Door. And as the Father rejoyceth, ſo the Angels in Heaven rejoyce, and all the Faithful ſhall rejoyce, and ſay, Oh my Husband, Oh my Father, Oh my Child, and my Wife that was a ſinful Woman, is come home again to her firſt and beſt Husband. You that have found it thus in your ſelves, be comforted: you that know it in others, rejoyce.

To ſum up all briefly, we ſee,

Firſt, When we have pluck'd away all carnal Props, that then there is way made for the Promiſe to come in to us.

Secondly,

Secondly, And when our Hearts are possessed throughly of the Sufficiency of God's Promise and Grace, that then the Promise that draws near, begins its Work.

Thirdly; That when we exp.& all from the Promise, even Power to come to it, that then it lays fast hold upon us.

Fourthly; That when we are content to yield to the just Conditions of the Promise, then the Promise carries us, and all in us.

Thus we have seen the Hinderances removed, and the Means propounded: and now that we may be moved and perswaded importunately to seek after this blessed Grace of God: let us further consider thus much, namely, that if we once get this Grace, we get all other Graces with it, which is a ground of much Comfort, and cannot but keep us doing: For will it not much encourage a Man when in the doing of one Work he knows he shall do another, nay, all his Work with one labour! but so it is in the work of Faith. Oh then

then how ſhould it encourage us to labour for *Faith*, ſeeing that by getting it, we have all? Men that are wiſe to provide for themſelves, and to lay out their Monies in ſome Purchaſe for the beſt; when they ſee a Ground well wooded and watered, but eſpecially to have ſome rich Mines in it, all their Minds will be upon ſuch a place, becauſe, having it, they have all with it: So it ſhould be here, in our Deſires: and as there, ſo here: get Grace, and get all: ſtrengthen here, and all is ſtrong: but want here, and want every where: having this Grace of Faith, you need not ſeek for Wiſdom, for Faith will make you wiſe to Salvation: and you need not labour for Patience, for he that is faithful, will be patient: and ſo for other Graces. He that hath the Grace of Faith. hath them all, hath Holineſs, hath Cleanneſs, hath Love, hath a pure Mind, and good Conſcience; and what hath he not? The Saints of God endeavour with much Pains to get Grace, and to ſubdue Corruption: but becauſe they take not the right

Faith to be laboured for above all Graces.

right way to it, they seek and not find.

Many a poor Soul mourns and cries to Heaven for Mercy, and prays against a stubborn hard Heart, and is weary of his Life, because this vile Heart remains yet in him; and yet haply gets little or no redress: the reason is, and the main Wound lies here; he goes the wrong way to work; for, he that would have Grace must (first of all) get Faith, Faith wil bring all the rest; buy the Field, and the Pearl is thine; it goes with the Purchase, thou must not think with thine own strugling to get the mastery of a proud Heart; for that will not do: but let thy Faith go first to Christ, and try what that can do. There are many Graces necessary in this work; as Meekness, Patience, Humility and Wisdom: now Faith will fetch all these, and possess the Soul of them. Brethren, therefore if you set any price upon these Graces, buy the Field, labour for Faith; get that, and you get all. The Apostle saith, *We all with open Face beholding, as in a Glass,*

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thy Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image from Glory to Glory. The Lord Chriſt is the Glaſs, and the glorious Grace of God in Chriſt, is that Glory of the Lord: therefore firſt behold this Grace in Chriſt by Faith (and thou muſt ſo, before thou canſt receive Grace.) Firſt, See Humility in Chriſt, and then fetch it thence: firſt ſee Strength and Courage in him, whereby to enable thy weak Heart, and Strength will come; there fetch it, and there have it. Would you then have a meek, gracious and humble Heart? I dare ſay for ſome of you, that you had rather have it than any thing under Heaven, and would think it the beſt bargain that ever you made; which is the cauſe why you ſay, O that I could once ſee that day, that this proud Heart of mine might be humbled: Oh if I could ſee the laſt Blood of my Sins, I ſhould then think my ſelf happy, none more, and deſire to live no longer. But is this thy deſire, poor Soul? then get Faith, and ſo buy the whole, for they all go together: nor think

think to have them upon any price; not having Faith: I mean Patience and Meekneſs, and the humble Heart: but buy Faith the Field, and you have the Pearl. Further, would you have the Glory of God under Eye, and be more heavenly-minded? then look to it, aud get it by the Eye of Faith: look up to it in the Face of Jeſus Chriſt, and then you ſhall ſee it; and then hold you there: for there, and there only, this Viſion of the Glory of God is to be ſeen, to your everlaſting Peace and endleſs Comfort. When Men uſe to make a Purchaſe, they ſpeak of all the Commodities of it; as, That there is ſo much Wood worth ſo much; and ſo much Stock worth ſo much, and then they offer for the whole, anſwerable to theſe ſeverals. So here there is *Item* for an Heavenly-Mind, and that's worth thouſands; and *Item* for an humble Heart, and that's worth Millions: and ſo for the reſt. And are thoſe Graces ſo much worth? what is Faith worth then? Hence, we may conclude, and ſay, Oh precious

Faith

Faith! precious indeed, that is able to bring ſo many, nay, all Graces with it: as one degree of Grace after another: and Grace here, and Happineſs for ever hereafter. If we have but the Hearts of Men (I do not ſay of Chriſtians) methinks this that is ſpoken of Faith, ſhould provoke us to labour always, above all things, for this bleſſed Grace of God, the Grace of Faith.

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